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THE  
HISTORY OF LEICESTER  
IN THE  
EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.

*By the same Author.*

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THE HISTORY OF LEICESTER,  
FROM THE TIME OF THE ROMANS TO THE END OF THE  
SEVENTEENTH CENTURY.

*Royal 8vo. Cloth.—Price 21s.*

THE  
HISTORY OF LEICESTER

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EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.

BY

JAMES THOMPSON,

AUTHOR OF A HISTORY OF LEICESTER FROM THE TIME OF THE ROMANS  
TO THE END OF THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY.



LEICESTER: CROSSLEY AND CLARKE.  
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## PREFACE.

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A FEW sentences of explanation are required to introduce this volume to the public. As it may fall into the hands of readers who have not seen the History of Leicester by the same author, published in the year 1849, it is necessary to state that this work is in continuation of that history, which brought the narrative down to the year 1700. In this book an endeavour has been made to trace the various changes in society, local manners, political institutions, and popular customs, effected in the course of a century in a provincial town which may fairly be taken as an example of the class of similar places in England. It will thus contribute to a knowledge of the growth of the middle classes of the country during the reigns of Queen Anne and the three first Georges, and in this respect it has a more than merely local interest. In addition, many events and incidents, spoken of by elderly inhabitants as almost within their direct knowledge, in consequence of their having heard of them from elderly predecessors, and which have now become traditional, are here recorded in an authentic manner, after proper investigation of the evidence on which their relation is based. Several chapters have also been added; embodying new and interesting information concerning the Town Estate, the Stocking Manufacture, the Parliamentary Representation, and the Religious Denominations, which the Author hopes will not fail to prove acceptable to many persons.

The sources of this History are few but trustworthy: first, the Hall Books and Records of the Town have always been left open to the examination of the Author by Samuel Stone, Esq., the Town Clerk, their custodian, and no restriction whatever has been placed on the making of such extracts from them as were needed in the composition of the work; second, the file of the *Leicester Journal*, which commenced its issues in 1753, has been freely placed at the disposal of the Author by its proprietors, Messrs. Jackson and Foster, and has furnished a large proportion of the material given in the volume; thirdly, the local historians, Nichols and Throsby, have been consulted, though they have not yielded so much information as the Town Records and the file of the *Journal*; and, lastly, contemporary magazines have occasionally been laid under contribution in the preparation of the book. To Mr. Stone and to Messrs. Jackson and Foster my grateful acknowledgments are specially due, and are hereby tendered, for the courtesy they have manifested in the way already described; and to all others who have rendered me occasional help my thanks are also cordially given.

JAMES THOMPSON.

LEICESTER, NOVEMBER, 1871.

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## LEICESTER IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.

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### CHAPTER I.

LEICESTER AT THE COMMENCEMENT OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY—  
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—REVIEW OF ITS HISTORY IN THE REIGN OF WILLIAM AND MARY—  
THE EARL OF STAMFORD AND THE CORPORATION—THE NONJURORS  
—ALDERMAN WILKINS AND THE WATER SUPPLY—INTRODUCTION OF  
BRICK HOUSES—COMPLIMENTARY PRESENTS OF THE EARLS OF  
RUTLAND AND STAMFORD TO THE CORPORATION—SIR NATHAN  
WRIGHT'S CONNECTION WITH LEICESTER—SALE OF "REYNOLD'S  
PLACE" TO PAY TOWN DEBTS—DEATH OF WILLIAM THE THIRD.

AT the commencement of the eighteenth century the town of Leicester did not contain more than six thousand inhabitants. The houses in which they lived were in general constructed of wood and plaster; for bricks were not in common use; and the appearance of the place had not altered for two or three centuries. The streets were either badly paved or not paved at all, and in the dark evenings of winter they were neither lighted by oil nor by any other artificial means. Down the middle of the streets ran the gutters. Rows of venerable fabrics presented their gable ends and overhanging storeys, ornamented with carved woodwork, to the public ways; and the old gates yet idly guarded the main entrances. In the centre of the town was the Market Place, surrounded by quaint houses of timber, without shop windows, and near the south-eastern side stood the public building called the "Gainsborough." How long it had been standing, it is impossible to say; but we know that part of it had served as a place of confinement early in the sixteenth century, when it was used for

purposes connected with the administration of justice.<sup>a</sup> It was a two-storey building, of which a chamber in the upper part was devoted to public business. There were shoemakers' shops below, and a balcony with piazza at the side nearest the Cornwall, with a dungeon beneath the adjoining level.

Among the inhabitants were old men, probably, who remembered the day when the artillery of Prince Rupert had thundered in their ears, and whose eyes had beheld the streets running with the blood of the parliamentarians, who had defended the walls against the royalist besiegers. The ramparts were in parts unlevelled, and the fosse was still empty; fragments of the walls yearly crumbling away being left to silent and unhindered decay. The same men who had witnessed the entrance of the cavaliers after the storming of the town had often seen George Fox in their midst, and listened to John Bunyan's quaint discourses. Through many a change of costume, also, had they lived; but the dress with which they were familiar would amuse, and perhaps startle us, their descendants. The gentlemen wore hats with upturned brims, the low crown of which was surmounted by feathers. Beneath the hat fell an enormous wig, the extravagant folds of which flowed upon the shoulders, and resembled those now worn by barristers in courts of law; the "dandies" being wont to kill time by combing out their perukes. No man who could afford to indulge in a "mountain of hair" denied himself the pleasure. The coats, of a claret colour, were usually decorated with lace; their sleeves terminating in large open cuffs, and the seam and edges being embroidered. To a long neckcloth were appended ends of rich Brussels lace. A high-heeled shoe, fastened with buckles, was a marked feature in the costume; while no gentleman appeared in public without his small sword. The ladies wore their hair combed upwards, and covered by rows of lace and ribbon; above which was seen a kerchief or laced scarf. Among the working-classes, the men wore broad-brimmed hats—being invested in capacious coats, buttoned to the chin and descending to the knees; while over their coats they had cloaks, and on their feet they had high-heeled and long-toed shoes. The women of the same class were clothed in lace bodices, with small sleeves and cuffs; a bunch of gay ribands being appended to the waist where the apron was fastened, and smart bows being fixed upon the insteps of the high-heeled and sharp-pointed shoes. The head was covered with a hood and a plain hat, the brim being turned slightly upwards. There was a marked distinction in dress

<sup>a</sup> See *History of Leicester* (1849), p. 250, for a description of "the most vile prison called the Gainsborough," written by Robert Broughton to Mr. Conyngsby, in the reign of Queen Mary (1553, 1554).

between persons having any pretension to gentility, and those whose position in life was humble and laborious.

It is with Leicester, when it presented such an aspect to the spectator, and amid such a population, that this history commences; though it may be desirable briefly to retrace our steps to a date when local events were influenced by a great historical change—the accession of William and Mary.

William, Prince of Orange, and Mary, his Queen (the eldest daughter of the King who had abdicated), were crowned in April, 1689. The nation felt—especially the Presbyterians and the Dissenters—that they had in this monarch a protector and deliverer; but the High Church and Tory party soon manifested their dislike to his government, although they had acquiesced in the opposition offered to that of his father-in-law, James II.

In Leicester, it was resolved to celebrate the coronation with every demonstration of rejoicing. At a meeting of the body, held on the 11th, it was agreed that on that day they should dine at the Angel Inn, and that the costs should be paid by the Corporation—all the gentlemen and “persons of good quality and fashion” to be entertained at the public expense. In the Common Hall it was debated whether the diners should be regaled gratuitously or not; when thirty-two members of the Corporation voted in favour of the measure, and nine (probably discontented friends of the runaway King), wishing to play the part of the dog in the manger, voted against the proposition.

This was a period of bounteous hospitality and epicurean indulgence, as a bill of fare for a Mayor’s feast of the time amusingly bears witness. Along the old hall, on such occasions, we learn, extended two tables, called the first and the second: in the Mayor’s Parlour, also, were a first and a second table: and in the chamber upstairs was another table. The first course at the principal table in the hall consisted of three “messes.” When they are enumerated, it will be seen the boards groaned beneath a load of substantial dishes and rich viands, while they exhaled odours most grateful to the perceptions of the Mayor, the Twenty-four, the Forty-eight, and their invited guests, and streams of savoury fumes rose to the timbers of the ancient fabric. These three “messes” of the first course consisted of a collar of brawn, a dish of fish, venison pasty, chine and turkey, ham and pullet, mince pies, grand salad, roast geese, venison pasty (again), and tongues and elders. These were served at every table. The second course shows that the jovial Corporators found it necessary to stimulate the jaded appetite with lighter fare as they proceeded. It was composed of a dish of wild fowl, a dish of lobsters, a dish of

pullets, wardens and puffs, sturgeon, collared pig, ducks, ham and tongues, tarts, rabbits, and custards.

The ruins at Bradgate, which now attract holiday-makers in summer, and impress the visitor by their associations with Lady Jane Grey and her early history, are those of the mansion inhabited in the reign of William III. by the family of which she was in a previous century a member. Its head was at this date Thomas, the second earl, the grandson but immediate successor of Henry, the first earl, who was the chief of the Parliamentary party, and whose blue banner had been unfurled in many a deadly skirmish in this district, during the Civil War. The representative of the Greys in the reign of William III. was avowedly a friend of that monarch, and of the principles of civil and religious freedom with which he identified himself. It was this sympathy which induced the Earl of Stamford to cultivate friendly relations with the Corporation of Leicester.

In September of this year a second civic feast was held at the Angel, in honour of the Earl. The Common Hall met to deliberate on the subject on the 11th of the month. At such a meeting, one subject was quite sufficient to engross the attention of the collective wisdom of the assembly, and the result was an order which evidently corresponds to the importance of the occasion. "Ordered," says the manuscript record, "that the Earle of Stamford shall be entertained at a feast at the Angel, and that the Companies that dyne there be free and paid for at the Corporation's charge; and such gentlemen as he shall bring with him, and such other gentlemen and others shall be allowed every person sixpence a piece in wine."

This entertainment, it must be understood, was not designed to supersede the Mayor's feast in November, when the two courses in all their variety and redundancy afforded the customary delight to the Corporation, after the newly-chosen Mayor (Mr. Bent) had attended the Castle, accompanied by the macebearers, and there taken the oath of obedience to the Duchy of Lancaster in the usual manner.

The accession of William, and his virtual election by Parliament, instead of a succession by hereditary pretension, were directly at variance with the convictions and sentiments of the advocates of the "right divine" of sovereigns. Several of the temporal and spiritual lords on this account refused to take the oaths of allegiance and supremacy, and they and others who pursued a similar course were designated "Nonjurors." It would appear from the petitions of various members of the Corporation, praying to be dismissed from their positions, presented at this time to the Mayor and his colleagues, that there were several persons of this party in Leicester. They

assign some other reason than that of disaffection for desiring to secede, but the real motive was probably that here stated. One of this class of politicians thus wrote to the Mayor :

"The humble request of John Burdett to the Worshipfull Mr. Mayor and the rest of his bretheren, and to all whome this may conserne. I having heretofore bene one of the Coman Counsell for this burow, and whilest my contience [conscience] could sarve me to act in my place I am shuer never a one that did belonge to the same sositiey did give theare Attendance more than I did, and I am very sartin never a one more carefull in doeing of Busenes with the best Judgment and skill that I had; and now for sume resons here, and for sume resons I have given heretofore, I hope with your serious consideration of this you will be plesed for to dismis me; for trewley I am not a fitt person to come amonkest you upon so publick a busenes. And this I must make bould to tell you, that I doe beleave that thare hath not bene the like presedent maide upon anny man in England before, as hath beene made upon mee by this Corporation; and shuerly K. [King] William will never give any man thanks for chusing sutch men in this sort of publick offis no more, but hoping you will be pleased to pardon my bouldness and grante mee my request, rest your servant,

"JOHN BURDETT."

"June the 2d. 1690."

The Nonjurors found themselves placed as awkwardly under the new order of things as were the Presbyterians and others, who in the reign of Charles II. had been called on to take oaths to which they objected, or otherwise been subjected to disabilities. In this town the system continued in operation until the Corporation adopted a very stringent measure, which was thus recorded on the minutes of their proceedings (July 9, 1691):

"Whereas of late, divers persons who have been elected into the office of a Common Councilman of this Borough have contemptuously refused to take upon themselves the said office or place into which they have been so elected; or, having accepted the said place, have *refused to take the oaths and subscribe the Declaration* appointed to be taken by several Acts of Parliament for that purpose; by reason of which neglect the said persons do cease to be members of the said Company, to the great hindrance of the good government of this Borough. For the prevention whereof, for the time to come, and to the end that every person who shall be elected to be a member in this body Corporate may be compelled to take upon him the said office, and to qualify himself for the holding thereof, it is ordained and enacted by the Mayor and Aldermen, with the advice of the Common Councilmen, now assembled, that such person or persons, so neglecting or refusing, shall forfeit to the Mayor, Bailiffs, and Burgesses of this Borough, and their successors, the sum of one hundred marks of good money of England; or such greater or lesser sum as it shall seem meet to the said Mayor or Aldermen to impose upon such person or persons so neglecting or



refusing; to be levied by distress of the goods and chattels of such person or persons, or to be recovered by action of debt, bill, or plaint, in any of their Majesties' Courts of Record. It is agreed that the bye-law above written shall be put in execution when, and as often as, any member of the body corporate of the Borough shall offend in the premises."

In this way the Tories were caught in a trap like that which they had set for the Whigs, when, after the Restoration, they were in undisputed ascendancy.<sup>b</sup>

At this time an ingenious watchmaker, named Wilkins, was living in Leicester.<sup>c</sup> He was a man of many schemes, and to a certain extent a mechanical genius. Among other things, he invented a machine to sow and harrow, if not plough, at the same time. He employed many journeymen in different kinds of skilled labour. One of these, was the external decoration of houses, and some of those which are still standing bear testimony to the talent of Wilkins' workmen. But the grandest scheme of which he was the author was the attempt to provide Waterworks for Leicester.

Mr. Wilkins was an Alderman of the Borough; and in the year 1692, on the decease of Mr. Geo. Beckett, the Mayor, during his year of office, was chosen as Mr. Beckett's successor. It is recorded that the Corporation generally were jealous of Mr. Wilkins' abilities, and therefore placed him in the Mayoralty merely as a supplementary Mayor, instead of electing him for a whole year, as was usual in the case of other persons. He, however, found a patron in Mr. Carter, a resident of high respectability—the father of Mr. Baron Carter—who advanced £2,000 to enable the enterprising Alderman to make his experiment. The water was to be supplied from the Soar, in leaden pipes, which were laid from the Castle Mill to the locality of the Peacock Inn, in Southgate Street; and thence it was intended to convey the water in other pipes to all quarters. The pump used in the operation stood near the Consanguinitarium, and was long called the Water House Pump. In the year of his Mayoralty, £124 4s., was paid to Mr. Wilkins for 940 yards of new leaden pipes, and therefore he proceeded to a considerable extent in carrying out his proposals. Still, very little is now ascertainable respecting the ultimate issue of

<sup>b</sup> In referring to the list of Aldermen who remained in the Corporation after this ordinance had been passed, and who must in consequence have been sworn adherents to the Orange dynasty, we find they were as follows:—Mr. John Goodall, Mayor, Mr. George Beckett, Mayor Elect, Mr. William Southwell, Mr. William Deane, Mr. Philip Abney, Mr. John Roberts, Mr. George Bent, Mr. Thomas Ludlam, Mr. Walter Hood, Mr. Joseph Cradock, Mr. William Bentley, Mr. John Bent, Mr. John Wilkins, Mr. John Brookesby, Mr. Edmund Johnson, Mr. Thomas Palmer, Mr. John Pares, Mr. Henry Pike, Mr. Edmund Cradock, Mr. William Springthorpe, Mr. John Cracroft, and Mr. Godfrey Barrowdale.

<sup>c</sup> Throsby's *History of Leicester*, p. 179.

his undertaking; though it appears that the plan of deriving the water from the Castle Mill was abandoned, and that a spring or springs in the fields on the south-east side of the town were converted into the fountain-head of the supply. It was in reference to this arrangement that, at a Common Hall held on the 9th of June, 1696, it was ordered "that Mr. John Wilkins shall repair the pipes that are laid from the Conduit in the field to the Conduit in the town at the charge of the Corporation, and maintain the common decay that shall happen to the said pipes for 5s. per annum, at his own charge; and that Mr. John Wilkins shall mend the Conduit in the field at the charge of the Corporation."<sup>a</sup>

Towards the close of the year 1694, Queen Mary, the wife of William III, died, shortly after the decease of her favourite prelate, Archbishop Tillotson. On the occurrence of this event, the friends of King James (who were commonly known as "Jacobites") renewed their efforts to promote his restoration; a scheme of insurrection being framed, and a plan of assassinating the King resolved on, by the desperate partizans of the exiled monarch. The failure of the former, and the detection of the latter, induced both Houses of Parliament to draw up an Association, binding themselves to assist each other in the support of the King and his Government, and to revenge any violence that should be committed on his person. In Leicester this Association was signed at a Common Hall in January 1696.

In the reign of which we are here treating, the coin of the country was so deteriorated by clipping that its state became a national grievance. On the proposition of an eminent statesman (Mr. Montagu) the recoinage of the current money was accordingly resolved upon. Certain conditions concerning the clipping of money accompanied the carrying out of the measure—one of which was that the loss accruing to the revenue from such money should be borne by the public. In this state of affairs, it was resolved at a Common Hall that two persons be sent up to London to "solicit for some new money" for the use of the poor of the Corporation as small money; and a petition to the Lords' Commissioners who managed the new currency, praying for £6000 in new money to be exchanged for clipped money, was adopted.

The police management of the borough was at this date entrusted to the parish constables, who were instructed to attend to their duties by the precept of the Mayor, couched in the phraseology of the following exact copy:

"Burgus Leic. To Joseph Large, Constable of Mr. William Southwell's Ward, or to his lawful Deputy. These are, in his Majesties name, to

<sup>a</sup> See the Hall Book of this date.

command you to make diligent search after all Rogues, Vagabonds, and Idle wandring Beggars within your Ward, and you shall enquire if Huy and Cry have been duly pursued as the Law requires, And what strangers are come into your Ward, and endeavour to settle themselves there, not being duly qualified as the Law directs, and if any persons sell Ale without License or keep disorderly houses or suffer unlawful Games to be used in their houses, yards, or backsides; and all other Offences committed or done within your Liberty, contrary to the Lawes and Statutes of this Realme, You are to present unto me and the rest of the Justices of this Burrough on Friday next, at two of the clock in the Afternoon, of the same day, at the Guild Hall of the said Burrough, and that you yourself be then and there personally present to make returne of this Precept. And hereof fail not at your perrill. Dated the 27th day of August, Anno. Dni. 1696. John Pares, Maior.”\*

In this year, Christmas Day fell upon Friday, and St. Stephen's of course on the day after. It appeared impossible to the Churchmen of the Leicester Corporation to neglect the observance of so important a day in the calendar. The Mayor therefore met the contingency by this public notice: “John Roberts, Esq., Mayor of this Burrough and Clark of this Markett hath thought good to give notice to all persons whatsoever in regard that Saturday next being the usuall Markett day for this Towne happeneth to fall upon St. Stephen's day in Christmas, That the Markett usually kept on that day be kept on Thursday next at the accustomed places for Markett Daies, when and whither all persons are desired to resort, as upon the accustomed Markett Day, to buy and sell as heretofore. God save the King.”

The arrangement made with Mr. Alderman Wilkins in respect to the Water Supply was not permanent or satisfactory; for in March, 1697, the Corporation entered into a bargain with him, of which the principal object was to sever the connection between him and themselves. They agreed to give him £40 if he would deliver up both the engines and leave the water-courses and the Conduit in good repair; binding himself, if any repairs were found to be necessary, to make them at his own expense.

Towards the close of the seventeenth century many of the old houses of Leicester were destined to be swept away and replaced wholesale by new edifices. The circumstance to which this change was attributable was the discovery, or at least the general excavation, of the beds of clay surrounding the town, and the making of bricks in large quantities, which were used in the building of new or the rebuilding of old dwellings. In the latter part of this year, it was ordered at a Common Hall that Edward Broughton should have leave

\* See the Hall Papers, 1695-1700, preserved in the Town Museum.

to exchange the piece of land held of the Corporation to make bricks of (it being ground not fit for grazing), for the like quantity of ground with Mr. John Wilkins, or any other of the tenants of the Southfields that lay near his ground, paying the same rent. As this entry on the Hall proceedings is the first which mentions brick-making, it suggests the time when the process was first carried on near Leicester.

At the end of the year, the war in Europe, which had been long, bloody, and ruinous to England, was terminated by the peace of Ryswick. King William (who had been present at the negotiations) returned to this country in November. Everywhere the intelligence of the peace was received with rejoicing. In this town a bonfire was made in the Market Place, near the building called "the Gainsborough," and a hogshead of ale was ordered for the populace at the public expense.

As Christmas Day happened to be on Saturday in 1697, the Mayor gave notice that the weekly Market would be held on Friday.

Among other abilities possessed by the Corporation at this time, was that of pensioning impoverished Aldermen. A case of this sort occurred in July 1698, which is best described in the application of the writer himself. It runs thus :

"To the Right Worshipful Henry Pate, Mayor of the Borough of Leicester, and the Worshipful the Aldermen, his Brethren, assembled. The humble petition of Thomas Palmer, one of the Aldermen of the said Borough, sheweth, That your petitioner, having to the utmost of his power and ability faithfully served you in the several stations, qualities, and degrees of Common Councilman, Alderman, and Mayor of this Borough, as in duty he was bound to, but being now seized with a great infirmity in his body and very much weakened in his estate, and thereby rendered utterly incapable of serving this Corporation as he ought and is in duty bound to do, in the place of an Alderman or Company of the Four and Twenty—your petitioner therefore prays your worships' tender consideration of the premises, to grant him a dismissal from his place and future attendance as one of the Aldermen or said Company of the Four and Twenty. And your petitioner shall ever pray, &c."

"THOMAS PALMER."

The Corporation acceded to Mr. Palmer's request, by dismissing him from the Aldermanship, at their meeting held on the 13th of June; and at the next meeting they resolved to make him a weekly allowance of 4s. towards his maintenance, during pleasure.

We have already noticed the compliment paid to the Earl of Stamford by the Corporation, in inviting him to a public banquet held in his honour. It would seem that the Earl's popularity was

maintained unimpaired for many years in succession. The Earl of Rutland, also, was on terms of friendship with the civic authorities. Residing at Belvoir Castle, he was not so near a neighbour as Lord Stamford, but the ties of political amity between him and the Corporation were probably as strong as those which bound the Leicester Whigs to the Lord of Bradgate. The Earl of Rutland was the father of Lord John Manners, who married Catherine, the second daughter of Lord William Russell—the martyr of political liberty, who was beheaded in the reign of Charles II. As a leader of the popular party, the Earl of Rutland cultivated the friendship of the Leicester Liberals. To assuage the wounded feelings of the Russell family, and their connection, the Earl of Rutland, he was elevated to a dukedom in 1703.

Exchanges of complimentary presents between the Earl of Stamford and the Corporation, and the Earl of Rutland and the Corporation, were frequent at this period. The memoranda of these interchanges of friendship come down to us—not with all the living interest of being transmitted orally, but in the dry entries of the Chamberlain's Accounts. A present of sack and claret to one or both of the Earls was reciprocated by them with a fat buck, and the noblemen sometimes feasted with the Mayor and Aldermen, and all grew merry together at the "Venison Feasts."<sup>f</sup>

The Earl of Rutland sends a fat buck to the Corporation, which serves as the chief dish in a civic banquet, to which gentlemen resident in the neighbourhood are invited. Copious draughts of ale are drunk, pipes of tobacco are smoked, the waits play their liveliest tunes, and the town servants and the gentlemen's servants are regaled on the occasion.<sup>g</sup>

<sup>f</sup> In the year 1698 these items in the accounts point to the occasions in question :

	£.	s.	d.
Item, for 10 gallons of sack, a present to the Earl of Stamford - -	4	0	0
Item, to Mr. Walker for a rundlet for the sack - - -	0	3	0
Item, paid for a Horse hire for the Cryer to carry the sack - -	0	1	0

<sup>g</sup> At the end of the year the accountant thus places on record these details :

Item, paid the Earl of Rutland's keeper for bringing a buck, and the messenger, by order of Mr. Mayor - - -	0	1	0
Item, paid Mr. Mayor for a hogshead of ale spent at eating the Earl of Rutland's venison - - -	4	10	0
Item, for Sir William Villiers, Mr. Babington, Mr. Wood, and two Mr. Gee's Ordinaries - - -	0	5	0
For Town Clerk and Mace-bearers' Dinners - - -	0	2	0
Item, for Dinners for the four sergeants, four waits, and cryer, and beadle, and the man that drew the ale - - -	0	7	4
Item, for pipes and tobacco - - -	0	6	0
Item, paid the man that drew the ale - - -	0	1	0

The Corporation has scarcely finished the banquet on Lord Rutland's venison, before the Earl of Stamford supplies another buck to grace its tables.<sup>b</sup>

It was not only at these Venison Feasts and the Mayor's Feast that the members of the Corporation indulged in mirth and jollity; as we find the Races occurred every year, when there were doubtless ordinaries and other social gatherings, equally convivial.<sup>i</sup>

It was absolutely necessary at this time that the Mayor should in his own house entertain noblemen and gentlemen who visited Leicester; but in so doing he was assisted out of the town funds, as all things being considered, his wine bills were rather heavy.<sup>k</sup>

The age was characterized by its bacchanalian habits and love of feasting. At this time, it is almost needless to state, there was very

	£.	s.	d.
Item, paid for six gentlemen's servants - - - - -	0	4	0
Item, paid the Waits for playing at the eating the said buck - - -	0	10	0
<sup>b</sup> The matter and its concomitants are thus particularized in the accounts of the Chamberlains:			
Item, paid Isaac Brookes for going to Bradgate to bespeak the buck -	0	1	0
Item, paid the Earl of Stamford's keeper and messenger for a buck and two haunches - - - - -	0	15	0
Item, paid Mr. Mayor for a hogshead of ale at eating the said buck -	4	10	0
Item, paid for the Ordinaries for the Earl of Stamford, Sir Wm. Villiers, Mr. Hodges, a French gentleman, Mr. Allsop, Mr. Godsmen, Sir William Villiers' gentleman, Mr. Rogers and Mr. Wood - - - - -	0	10	0
Item, paid for the Town Clerk and Mace-bearers' Ordinaries - - -	0	2	0
Item, paid for the Ordinaries of the Gentlemen's Servants at that time, at 8d. a piece - - - - -	0	9	4
Item, paid for the Ordinaries of the four sergeants, four waits, crier, and beadle, and the man that drew the ale - - - - -	0	7	4
Item, paid for tobacco and pipes at the same time - - - - -	0	6	0
Item, paid the Waits for playing at the same time - - - - -	0	10	0
Item, paid Mr. Fish for two dozen bottles of claret and twelve bottles of canary at the eating of the said buck - - - - -	3	0	0
<sup>i</sup> In the year under notice, the Races are thus mentioned in passing:			
Item, paid Mr. Bowler towards the plate run for at the Abbey Meadow -	2	0	0
<sup>k</sup> For this reason such items as these occur in the Chamberlains' Accounts:			
Item, paid Mr. Fish for a bottle of canary and three bottles of claret, when the Earl of Stamford and other gentlemen were at Mr. Mayor's - - -	0	6	6
Item, paid him more for three bottles of canary, and three bottles of claret when the Bishop of Durham was in town - - - - -	0	10	6
Item, paid more for a bottle of canary and two bottles of claret, when Sir Edward Abney was at Mr. Mayor's as by bill - - - - -	0	5	0
Item, paid to Mr. Fish for a bottle of canary and two of claret, when Archdale Palmer, Esq., came to visit Mr. Mayor - - - - -	0	5	0
Item, paid to him more for a bottle of canary and two bottles of claret, when Dr. Foster visited Mr. Mayor - - - - -	0	5	0
Item, paid Mr. Fish more for a bottle of canary and two bottles of claret, to treat Sir Nathan Wright - - - - -	0	5	0

little love of literature to be found among the inhabitants. Except in the Town Library, which was visited probably by the clergy, and now and then by a layman of studious habits, there were few books, if any, to be met with in the town. The Corporation defrayed the expenses of binding the ponderous volumes in the Library, as the accounts show; and of the few copies of newspapers which found their way here, the cost was paid in like manner. No private person, it is to be presumed, then subscribed to a journal in Leicester: those papers which did penetrate the dulness of the locality were regarded as luxuries for the especial use of the Mayor and the more influential men among his compeers.

Towards the close of the seventeenth century, the inhabitants of Derby made various attempts to render the Derwent navigable as far as the Trent; but the project was always so vigorously opposed by the people of Nottingham, Chesterfield, Bawtrey, and other towns, that its execution was long postponed. In the year 1699, at a Common Hall held in January, the Corporation of Leicester resolved by thirty to twelve votes to oppose the measure and to petition Parliament against it—a result which puts on record the narrow-mindedness of the municipal body, but which did not prevent the success of the proposal twenty years after.

At a second Common Hall, held in January, a letter was read from the Earl of Stamford, privately acquainting the authorities of his having received a request from the town of Market Harborough to obtain the right to hold a fair there. The Corporation thanked his lordship for his kindness in giving them notice of the application, and unanimously resolved to oppose the attempt—in the same spirit of illiberality which was shown in the opposition to the navigation of the Derwent.

The town at this date maintained a Bridewell, in which offenders against the law were punished. There being a vacancy in the post of keeper, a person named James Richmond was appointed to fill it; being first required to take up his freedom. In June, the Corporation resolved that he should be allowed to do so on paying for it £20; of which sum £7 was to be paid into the Chamberlain's hands: the remaining £13, with £5 more, he was to give a bond to the Corporation to expend upon the Bridewell house, within the ensuing six months; and when he had given a true account of the expenditure of that amount on the house, the bond was to be returned to him. He was also to undertake the payment of all local and state taxes. He was to be allowed five nobles a year for his salary as Bridewell keeper.

In November, the Corporation had so far modified their opposition



to the proposal of holding a fair at Market Harborough, as to petition that it might not be holden before the 24th of May, nor after the 10th of June. The petition was forwarded to the Earl of Stamford.

In the early part of the year 1700, the Corporation were brought into collision with one of their Chamberlains, Mr. George Bent, who neglected the execution of the duties of his office, and whom they therefore suspended. It is to be inferred, from the records of the resolutions adopted at Common Halls, that the Chamberlain's responsibilities were onerous, and the liabilities to which he was exposed unfair; as he was not merely treasurer and accountant, but was sometimes called on to advance money for the town out of his own pocket. Proposals were made for Mr. Bent's restoration to office, which, however, were unacceptable, either to one party or the other, and finally he was expelled from the Chamberlainship.

The proceedings arising out of this dispute were followed by a closer inspection of the accounts by the Corporation, and by the adoption of a resolution to economize expenses, to this effect, which (among others) was carried: "Ordered, That the £3 allowed Mr. Mayor for the Sessions dinners, and 24s. for the dinners to the Grand Jury, and 12s. for the Constables, for the future be taken off, and no dinner allowed."

Among the notable men whose names are identified in some degree with this town, once stood Sir Nathan Wright. He was a native of Barwell, in this county, and was brought up to the bar. In the year 1680 he was elected Recorder of Leicester, and continued in office for five years; the Earl of Huntingdon being then appointed under the new Charter. In 1688 he was rechosen Recorder, and a few years after took the degree of Sergeant-at-law, being made king's sergeant and knighted in 1696, when his connection with the borough ceased. He retained a very friendly feeling for the Corporation, by whom he was often entertained, and to whom he made a present of a silver bowl, in token of his regard, after he had resigned his appointment. When King William had peremptorily demanded the seals of Lord Chancellor Somers, "the most active leader of the Whig party," he placed them temporarily in commission, and then bestowed them on Sir Nathan Wright—"a man," says Smollett, "but indifferently well qualified for the office to which he was preferred," though in the estimation of the Tories, "he was deservedly advanced to the highest pinnacle of state preferments."

At this point in his career, the Corporation of Leicester despatched to the Lord Keeper the following address, with the common seal appended:—

"To the Right Honourable Sir Nathan Wright, Lord Keeper of the Great Seal of England,

"My Lord,

"We, the Mayor, Bailiffs, and Burgesses of the Borough of Leicester, having always preserved a just sense of the many favours which for several years we have received from your lordship, when we had the honour to have your lordship a member thereof, do unanimously beg leave of your honor that we may congratulate you on your accession to that high place of trust and honor which his majesty has been graciously pleased lately to confer upon you, we being entirely satisfied that the Great Seal of Justice could not be lodged with more safety than in the hands of your lordship (of whose justice and protection we have had so long experience), which that your lordship may long enjoy to the benefit of the public, and the particular honor which will redound thereby, both to our Corporation and Country, is the hearty desire of all."

The Lord Keeper held this post until the year 1705. On his retirement from the Court of Chancery, he passed the remainder of his days at his seat at Caldecote in Warwickshire.

The disposition to cut down expenses which followed Mr. Bent's refusal to act as Chamberlain, was prompted, it would seem, by necessity; as in the same year the Corporation ordered the town house, called the "Lord's Place," to be sold, in order that the proceeds might be applied to the payment of the debts of the Corporation.

This building (of which one turret still remains, in some part at least, in the High Street) was originally called "Reynold's Place," having probably been erected early in the sixteenth century by a member of the Reynold family, which, like other town families—as the Wigstons, the Heyricks, and the Gillots,—had risen to opulence in the course of the fifteenth century. Among the list of Aldermen of wards, in the reign of Richard III, John Reynold's name occurs in connection with the seventh ward, in which the upper part of High Street was included; and therefore it may be presumed he was then living either in the building known as "Reynold's Place," or on its site. Other persons of the same name were elected Mayors in the reign of Henry VIII.; so that the family had attained wealth and distinction in the period to which reference is here made.

As the mansion of burgesses of Leicester, living from three hundred to four hundred years ago, it was more extensive in its proportions and more stately in its architecture than it would be generally considered, in modern days, such an edifice was likely to be—the rank and position of its builders being regarded. Its front was ornamented with two lofty towers, between which was placed the

principal gateway: behind was an extensive court-yard: and the staircase in the turrets conducted to one large state chamber, and to smaller apartments. The facade was probably not unlike that of the ruined house in Bradgate Park, and of nearly the same date. Its first owners were doubtless wealthy merchants, whose household staff enabled them to live in lordly state and to maintain a bounteous hospitality.

From the Reynolds, the house passed to the possession of two gentlemen named Eaton, resident at Ravenstone and Leicester, who sold it early in the reign of Elizabeth, to Henry, the third Earl of Huntingdon, who made it his regular town house, and then it acquired the name of the "Lord's Place." From a descendant of the Earl, the house went into the hands of the Sherards of Stapleford; from them to two persons named Warburton and Bradley; and from them it was purchased by the Corporation in the year 1647. Forty years after, it was occupied by Lawrence Carter, gent., who had it on lease; and when that expired the Corporation resolved on selling it, as before stated. It was finally purchased by Simon Barwell, gent., for £400.

Such is a brief account of this edifice, in which Queen Mary was lodged while in the care of the Earl of Huntingdon, as already related, shortly before she was beheaded at Fotheringhay; in which King James, her son, was lodged when he visited Leicester; in which King Charles slept on various occasions: and though all that is left of it is the turret which still breaks the monotony of a row of shops, that relic suggests a theme worthy of romance and poetry still remaining amid the commonplace realities of the busy present.

The decease of the exiled monarch, James II., took place at St. Germain's, in September 1701. Before the event he was visited by the French king, who declared that, in case of his death, he would own James's son as king of England; and accordingly, when James died, the pretended Prince of Wales was proclaimed King of England, at St. Germain's, and treated as such at the Court of Versailles. All England was filled with indignation at Louis, for thus presuming to declare who ought to be their sovereign, and the city of London presented an address to the lords justices, expressing the deepest resentment of the French king's conduct; assuring William that they would at all times exert the utmost of their abilities for the preservation of his person, and the defence of his just rights, in opposition to all invaders of his crown and dignity. Addresses of the same nature were sent up from all parts of the kingdom. At a Common Hall of the Corporation of this town, held on the 10th of October, it was ordered, *nemine contradicente*, that an address in

similar terms should be forwarded to his majesty. But William did not long survive these expressions of loyalty to his person and crown, for on the 8th of March following he was numbered with his fathers.

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## CHAPTER II.

QUEEN ANNE PROCLAIMED IN LEICESTER—POLITICAL CONSEQUENCES OF ANNE'S ACCESSION—LOCAL REJOICINGS ON THE VICTORIES OF THE ENGLISH OVER THE FRENCH—VISIT OF THE EARL OF DENBIGH—THE DUKE OF MARLBOROUGH'S SUCCESSES AT BLENHEIM AND ELSEWHERE CELEBRATED—THE WOOLCOMBERS' ADMISSION TO THE FREEDOM OF THE BOROUGH—FURTHER REJOICINGS ON THE TRIUMPHS OF THE ENGLISH ARMY ABROAD—APPOINTMENT OF NIGHTLY BELLMEN—THE RULES OF DEBATE AT CORPORATION MEETINGS—PROVISION OF A TOWN WORKHOUSE—CORPORATION ADDRESS TO THE QUEEN—THE ENCLOSURE OF THE SOUTH FIELDS—REBUILDING OF THE CONDUIT—MURDER OF CAPTAIN FARNHAM—QUARRELS AMONG THE ALDERMEN—MR. ALDERMAN WILKINS AND THE CORPORATION—PEACE CONCLUDED WITH FRANCE—SHOPS AND SHEDS IN THE MARKET-PLACE—DISPLACEMENT OF ALDERMEN AND COMMON-COUNCILMEN—THE END OF ALDERMAN WILKINS—DEATH OF QUEEN ANNE.

WILLIAM III. died on the 8th of March, 1702. He was one of the greatest but one of the least popular of our English monarchs. By the Tories and Jacobites he was held in especial aversion. They, however, were delighted when Anne, Princess of Denmark, ascended the throne as his successor. She was the sister of Queen Mary, William's wife, and of James Stuart, "the Pretender;" and it was expected (as she in all probability would leave no heirs of her own body) that she would be induced to alter the succession in favour of her brother. Anne was extremely partial to the Tories, whom she regarded as firm monarchists and thorough-going churchmen; but her party predilections were greatly controlled by the Duchess of Marlborough, who obtained over her a peculiar ascendancy.

Queen Anne was immediately proclaimed in Leicester, when ale was distributed and bonfires blazed in the Market Place. At her

coronation, the local rejoicings were still more general and hearty. A public dinner was provided, ale was again given away among the populace, drums were beaten, and bonfires were lighted in the public places.<sup>1</sup>

In her speech to both houses, delivered on the 11th of March, the queen promised her subjects there was nothing they could expect or desire from her which she would not be ready to do for the happiness and prosperity of England. The assurances made by her Majesty were considered to be so satisfactory that all the public bodies sent up addresses to her—among the others, the Corporation of Leicester, who resolved upon so doing at their meeting held on the 16th of March following the inaugural address.

On the accession of Anne, the Tories in Leicester seem to have derived encouragement from the circumstance, and the Whigs to have been proportionately discouraged. This may be explained by the fact that the Court and the Government invariably influenced, more or less, the composition of the municipal body. Hence, while William the Third ruled, the Dissenters were protected, and the friends to the Protestant succession were in the ascendant, and therefore the Corporations were more politically Liberal. When Anne succeeded, it was anticipated the High Church party and the Jacobites would bear sway; the latter party, in fact, almost openly drank the health of "Sorrel"—the horse which threw king William over a mole-hill, and thus caused the accident terminating in his decease; and toasted the "Little Gentleman in Velvet"—the mole which threw up the hill over which the horse stumbled. In Leicester, the Whig Corporators now kept away from the Hall meetings, hoping thus to evade any participation in proceedings of which they might disapprove; but in order to enforce their attendance, the Tories who attended passed this

<sup>1</sup> The Chamberlains' Accounts for the year thus testify to the nature of the festivities indulged in on the occasion:

	£.	s.	d.
Paid Mr. Bradley for an hogshead of ale on the Coronation day	-	-	2 10 0
Five clergymen's ordinary for dinners	-	-	0 5 0
Town Clerk and Macebearer's dinners	-	-	0 2 0
Ten servants' dinners	-	-	0 6 8
Paid for a hundred and one bottles of wine	-	-	7 11 6
A flask of Florence wine	-	-	0 2 0
Two bottles of canary	-	-	0 4 0
Four pints of claret and white wine	-	-	0 3 0
Paid to the drummers on the Coronation day	-	-	0 7 0
Paid to Mr. Lord for 52 gallons of ale on the Coronation day	-	-	2 12 0
Paid to Mr. Pare for wine, &c., as by his bill appears at the same day	-	13	14 6
Paid to Mr. Pate for 27 gallons of ale at the same time	-	1	11 0
Paid to Edward Biddle for drawing the hogshead of ale at Mr. Bradley's	-	0	1 0
Paid to John Colson for 30 kids on the Coronation day	-	0	7 6

resolution: "It is ordered, according to a former order, that every person neglecting to appear at any meeting upon summons, or days which they are appointed to meet on, without summons, and have not 'spareing' [query, excuse?], every Alderman shall forfeit two shillings, and every Common Councilman shall forfeit and pay for the same default one shilling, according to the said Order, and the said Order to continue."

The passing of this Order was followed by a secession from the body of several of its members, and the appointment of fresh persons in their places. Mr. Nicholas Allsop, one of the Aldermen, was dismissed on his own petition, and his place filled by Mr. Edward Hood, one of the Common Councilmen. At the same meeting as that on which this change was made, Mr. Symon Martin, bookseller, Mr. Wm. Hammond, Mr. Wm. Miles, and Mr. Robt. Gamble, hosier, were elected members of the Common Council. The fines for non-attendance were levied, and are thus recorded in the Chamberlains' Accounts: "Received for fines of the members in the Hall, 17s."

The warlike continental projects of William were prosecuted by Anne; one of these being the reduction of Cadiz, with a view to act afterwards against the Spanish settlements in the West Indies. Admiral Rooke commanded the fleet and the Duke of Ormond the land forces destined for the expedition, and in October they jointly captured the fort of Vigo, with the French fleet lying in the harbour. At home, the victory was celebrated with great rejoicings. In this town, the popular exultation manifested itself in the accustomed manner.<sup>m</sup>

A day of special rejoicing was appointed, which is thus recorded in the Hall Book: "Thursday the 3rd day of December next, being by her Majesty appointed for a Day of Thanksgiving for the success of our forces by sea and land, it is therefore ordered by this Hall, that, in order to the greater solemnity of the day, the Company of the 24, and the Company of the 48, appear at the Guildhall on the same day, by nine of the clock of the forenoon, to go to church with Mr. Mayor in their formalities; and ordered that all dine together with whom and where Mr. Mayor pleaseth, at 1s. per piece for their

<sup>m</sup> The items in the Town Account make the style of rejoicing manifest:

	£.	s.	d.
Paid the drummers for beating, upon the news of taking Vigo by the Duke of Ormond	-	-	0 2 6
Paid for twenty kids for bonfires then	-	-	0 5 0
Paid for ale drunk upon that occasion	-	-	0 15 9
Paid to Mr. Pate at the Thanksgiving Day for the victory at Vigo, when the feast was, as per bill	-	-	5 7 0

ordinary, and that an hogshead of ale, and tobacco and pipes, be allowed by the town, and paid for by the Chamberlains."

In the year 1703 very little occurred locally to interest the reader. At this time, Basil, fourth Earl of Denbigh, was Lord Lieutenant of the County, having been so appointed on the accession of Queen Anne; and having been previously Master of the Horse to George, Prince of Denmark. Great respect being paid at this period to public officers of distinction, when the Earl paid a formal visit to Leicester, in July, all the members of the Common Hall attended in the Guildhall, at eight o'clock in the morning of the 13th, in order to meet his lordship. Wine and biscuits were provided, to entertain him and his friends with, on the occasion. At a subsequent date, when the queen's arms and the other armorial bearings placed on the Gainsborough were blazoned afresh, the Corporation ordered the Earl of Denbigh's heraldic insignia to be put up with them on the building, probably as those of the Lord Lieutenant of the County.

In the year following, on the 6th of March, there was a meeting of the Common Hall, at which it was resolved, that as the 8th of March was the day of the Queen's inauguration to the Crown, such a treat and rejoicing should be made as Mr. Mayor should think fit, to be paid for by the Chamberlains.

The year 1704 was more notable for public demonstrations than the transaction of local business, being the period of the Duke of Marlborough's great successes over the French and Bavarians, when the joy of the people of this country was unbounded. On the 2nd of July, the Duke, with the assistance of the Dutch and Prince Louis of Baden, routed the army under the Elector of Bavaria, at Schellenburg, near Donauwerth. When the report reached Leicester on the 5th of July, the Corporation, being in Common Hall, ordered "that if the news of the Earl of Marlborough's success be confirmed to-morrow, such a collation and treat be made to-morrow night, at the Gainsborough, as Mr. Mayor shall think fit, the charges to be paid by the Chamberlains." The intelligence being confirmed, bonfires were lighted, and ale was given away to the people.<sup>a</sup>

The battle of Schellenburg was, however, a small affair compared with the gigantic struggle at Hochstedt, or as it is more commonly called, "the battle of Blenheim," when Marlborough and Prince Eugene engaged the French and Bavarians under Marshall Tallard

<sup>a</sup> See the Chamberlains' Accounts :

	£.	s.	d.
Paid for twenty-two kids at the rejoicing for the victory over the Bavarians -	0	5	6
Paid Mr. Pate for ale at the same time - - - - -	0	5	8
Paid the drummers at the same time - - - - -	0	3	0

and the Elector, on the 13th of August, the day terminating in the utter defeat of the latter. On the arrival of the news in Leicester, there was a two days' feasting and jubilee. The people were mad with exultation. Again the bonfires were piled in the Market Place, again ale was supplied freely to the populace, again the bells of the churches pealed, again the drummers roused the town with their discordant echoes, and again the Corporation feasted.<sup>o</sup>

It needs scarcely to be remarked that this was an age of low debauchery and of popular ignorance; though it must be added that a demand for commercial freedom now arose in the borough. Up to this time, the law requiring all persons to be freemen of the town in which they settled, before commencing any kind of business, was rigidly enforced, and none dare to dispute its propriety. A change, however, began to manifest itself. Strangers and others attempted to carry on their trades and callings without taking up their freedoms, in defiance of ancient usages and the authority of the Corporation. In order to resist these efforts of the insubordinate portion of the inhabitants, the Corporation set in motion all the machinery at their command. At a Common Hall, held on the 5th January, 1705, they ordered that Mr. Recorder, Mr. Steward, and Mr. Solicitor be consulted as to the best method of forcing all those who exercised any trade, art, mystery, or occupation, within this Borough, not being freemen, to take up their freedom: and "what they should advise, the Hall ordered and agreed to should be forthwith prosecuted at the charge of the Corporation." What success attended the proceedings of the legal functionaries, the meagre memoranda of the body do not enable us to relate; but they were disposed to effect a compromise, in the first instance, as their resolution, adopted on the 30th day of August, was as follows: "Whereas, by an Order of this Hall, heretofore made, no stranger, or other person or persons whatever, should buy or have the freedom of this Corporation under the sum of twenty pounds, which said order has hitherto been duly observed, and is intended still to be continued, only [except] in the occupation of the Woolcombers, who, being pretty numerous, and it appearing to this

<sup>o</sup> All this is only feebly suggested in these items:

	£.	s.	d.
Paid for twenty-five kids at the rejoicing at the battle of Hockstet -	-	0	6 3
Paid the drummers at the same time -	-	0	3 0
Paid Mr. Goadby for ale at the Duke of Marlborough's victory -	-	1	0 0
Paid to John Dawson at the day of rejoicing for ale -	-	1	0 0
Paid to Mr. Pate for ale at the day of rejoicing -	-	2	15 3
Paid to Mr. Coats for ale at the day of rejoicing for the Duke of Marlborough's victory -	-	2	2 0
Paid to Mr Pare, as by bill (for wine) -	-	8	9 8



Hall to be an employment of a very considerable profit and advantage to the Corporation in general, and there being a great many of the said employment or business of Woolcombers that are not free of this Borough, and are thereby liable to have actions brought against them; therefore, this Hall, for the encouragement of the said manufacture and the workers thereon, do agree and it is hereby ordered and agreed, that all those Woolcombers that are not freemen of this Borough, and are willing and desirous to become freemen of the same, shall be admitted and have their freedom, upon paying the sum of ten pounds at the time of their freedom taking, to the Mayor for the time being, for the use of the Corporation; any order to the contrariwise notwithstanding." It will be perceived, as this history proceeds, how this concession operated.

The annals of this borough, in the reign of Queen Anne, present a record of almost yearly rejoicings on the triumphs obtained by British arms over foreign enemies. It is one continuous story of bacchanalian orgies, occasioned by the victories of the great general of the age. In 1706 the Corporation, at a Common Hall, agreed to address her Majesty by way of congratulating her upon the glorious successes obtained in Spain, and by the Duke of Marlborough in the Netherlands and Brabant; desiring Sir Geo. Beaumont, Bart., and James Winstanley, Esq., to be pleased to present the address. The document itself was prepared at Davies's Coffee House, where the Corporation met for the purpose. An entertainment suitable to the event was also ordered to be provided by Mr. Mayor (to be paid for by the Chamberlains); Thursday the 27th of June having been appointed as a "Day of Thanksgiving to Almighty God for the great and glorious victories obtained by her Majesty's forces and her allies over the common enemy." Again, in September, it was ordered that on the evening of St. Matthew's Day (the 21st) so much ale, and wood for bonfires, be ordered for rejoicing for the victory obtained by Prince Eugene in Italy, as Mr. Mayor shall think proper. In the upper room of the Gainsborough, the stout, ruddy-faced Aldermen, their heads buried in huge wigs, sat with long pipes, amid clouds of tobacco smoke, descanting upon the despatches which Mr. Mayor read out of the newspaper, and about which they grew vain-glorious the more rapidly the ale was circulated. Outside, the populace huzzaed round the bonfires; being allowed a share, proportionate to their station, in the potations indulged in by their superiors. On the 31st of December a Thanksgiving Day for the battle of Ramilies was celebrated, when a hogshead of ale, three gross of pipes, and two pounds of the best tobacco, were ordered at the public expense for the benefit of the revellers.

It was found necessary to institute a night-watch in this age of ale and tobacco. Whether the measure was called for by the brawls incident on the nocturnal revelries so frequently indulged in does not appear, though it is very likely it was so occasioned. It is thus minuted in the Hall Book: "It is ordered at this Hall that Nicholas Swingler and John Yates shall be bellmen, to go nightly through this borough from ten of the clock at night till six of the clock in the morning; to be removable at the pleasure of the Mayor for the time being. And that the Corporation shall provide bells to be paid for by the Chamberlains, and to be allowed in their accounts. And that each of the said bellmen shall have a coat bought for them by the Mayor for the time being; the price not to exceed 4s. per yard, and a small badge of silver, with the town arms put upon the sleeve of each coat, and two staves; the said bells, coats, badges, and staves, to be taken away, and bellmen removed, by the Mayor and Justices for the time being, or the more part, or the greater part of them, upon any misdemeanour."

The year 1707 was in incidents like its predecessors, except that a fresh cause of thanksgiving was provided for the Mayor, Aldermen, and Common Councilmen, in the ratification of the articles of the Union with Scotland; the first of May having been selected as the day on which the event was to be celebrated. In Leicester, thirty kids furnished bonfires, four drummers dealt out their sheep-skin melodies, ale was served round, and Mr. Mayor with a select few finished the day with wine at "the Angel"; as the Chamberlains' accounts testify.

In 1708 the Corporation held many meetings; and as those of previous dates had doubtless been disorderly, it was found expedient to adopt certain standing orders at the very beginning of the year. These were the regulations here referred to:

"That when a matter to be debated is proposed by the Mayor, every member shall keep his place during the debate, except he withdraw.

"That when any member would move on the debate, he stand up in his place, and direct himself to the chair.

"That no member break in upon another while he is speaking; and if it happen that two or more members stand up to speak at the same time, the senior be admitted to speak first.

"That the fine for the breach of any of the abovesaid Orders be sixpence, to be paid to the Chamberlains immediately."

In January, the Corporation came to the conclusion that a Work-house would be very useful and necessary for employing therein the poor of the town, and would "tend to the breeding up of the poor in good principles of religion, and be an advantage to all the parishes,

in respect of the charges they were then paying to the poor." A bill was thereupon introduced into the House of Commons to provide a Workhouse for Leicester; upon which the Corporation met to consider it, and adopted the following amendments on the measure, at a meeting held in March:

"That instead of eleven members [as guardians] out of this body they be reduced to six.

"That appeals be allowed (to such parts of the parishes that be out of the Borough) to the County Sessions.

"That the sum of two thousand pounds be altered to one year's levy of the respective parishes to the poor.

"That the gross sum to be levied on the parishes be appointed by the Guardians, and the respective parishes to assess on particular persons according to the usual way of raising the poor's rates in the several and respective parishes."

Towards the latter end of February, the Government had intelligence of an extraordinary armament in Dunkirk, which ultimately proved to be that of the French fleet, commanded by M. Forbin, with the Pretender, who had assumed the name of the Chevalier de St. George. A fleet under Admiral Byng was as early as possible despatched to attack the invading force, and took one of the men-of-war in Edinburgh Frith, on board of which were several noblemen, officers, and others, partizans of the Pretender; the attempted landing being thus frustrated.

The Corporation of this town (many of whom were strongly suspected of Jacobite principles) met on the 19th of March; and, whatever might be their secret sympathies, adopted the following address:

"To the Queen's most Excellent Majesty.

"The Humble Address of the Mayor, Bailiffs, and Burgesses of your Majesty's ancient Borough of Leicester, in the County of Leicester.

"May it please your Majesty,

"We humbly approach your Royal Throne with the deepest sense of our Duty and Allegiance to your Sacred Person, and with the utmost detestation and abhorrence of the Traitorous purpose of invading your Dominions by the Pretended Prince of Wales, assisted by a French Power.

"We doubt not but the same Divine Providence (concurring with your Majesty's Vigilant Care), which has so often baffled the pernicious Designs of your Majesty's most inveterate Enemy, the French King, will frustrate this most injurious and violent attempt.

"We humbly beg leave to assure your Majesty, that we shall readily devote all that is dear to us in defence of your Majesty's just and rightful Title to these your Imperial Realms, against all Pretenders whatsoever."

The petition was presented to Queen Anne by Sir George Beaumont and Mr. James Winstanley, who were introduced by the Vice Chamberlain.

In this year a measure was originated which created a bitter feud between the local authorities and the poor freemen; of a duration and followed by effects little anticipated, perhaps, by its promoters: the Corporation resolved on enclosing the South Fields.

Before entering into the details of the affair, it may be proper to observe, that perhaps the most ancient of popular rights are those possessed by the freemen of boroughs, especially those of pasturage upon public lands. During the Roman occupation of this island, it would seem probable a portion of the lands lying round the stations was allotted for the use, in common, of a privileged portion of the inhabitants. With the pertinacity which adheres to custom, especially when interest combines to render it acceptable and profitable to a large class, the system of common pasturage was continued during the sway of our Saxon ancestors. On the conquest of England by the Normans, the feudal barons of that race extinguished for a time the prescriptive usages and traditional rights of the burgesses of the boroughs, and assumed that such were vested in them alone, as the lords of the soil and the country. For several generations, the English people struggled against these lawless assumptions and groundless pretensions, which were based on the claim of might alone; and partly by purchase, partly by force of agitation, ultimately regained the rights of which they had been robbed, but of which the memory had always been transmitted from father to son as a precious heritage. When the authority of the Norman usurpers had waned away, a simple and equitable form of local government was gradually re-established in many towns, like Leicester, which prevailed during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries; and then the mass of the townspeople enjoyed undisputed their common customs. But when the Tudor Henry the Seventh succeeded to the throne, by means of an armed invasion, the borough councils were superseded by self-elected bodies, and the consequence was that the members of such bodies began to form designs of their own, for the purpose of self-aggrandizement; and they contrived to sacrifice the general interests to their selfish schemes, conspiring together to achieve their dishonest objects. Instead of protecting the rights of the poor freemen in the town-lands, they manœuvred by mutual consent to get the land enclosed, and to obtain parcels of it on long leases, at low terms, for themselves. With this preliminary explanation, what follows will be better understood.

Late in the reign of Elizabeth (1601) under the profession of a

desire to better the Cow Pasture, and to make it "sounder" for cattle, the municipal body agreed to let it from November until a fortnight before Lady Day, to Michael Thornton, for 40s., to be paid before St. Andrew's Day. Three years later, the Town Commissioners (appointed by the Corporation for settling and leasing the public lands) resolved that before letting the Grange Farm the Cow Pasture should be enlarged. In January, 1605, at a Common Hall, the authorities decided that no townsman should put into the Cow Pasture any more beast or sheep than they were entitled to, under a penalty of forfeiting 2s. for every beast, and the farmers of the Grange 6d. for every sheep; and none that kept teams (except the farmers) should put their draught horses into the meadows, or South Fields, at any time of the year, under a penalty of 2s. for every horse turned in, in violation of the order. Twenty years subsequently, the freemen petitioned the Mayor, the Commissioners, and the other Corporators, for the "compassing" and enlargement of the higher town pasture from Sutton's close to ——— Bridge; to promote which object many of the inhabitants had charitably contributed, and an almost general consent had been obtained. They prayed that the Cow Pasture might be enlarged for "the general benefit of the poorer sort," which (they said) "in all men's judgment is lawful;" but the Corporation returned for answer that the petition could not be granted, though they professed an intention to maintain the freemen's ancient privileges in the South Fields.<sup>p</sup> Again, in 1675—when two generations had passed away—a body of freemen addressed the Mayor and his colleagues concerning their grievances. They set forth that their ancient privileges were partly destroyed or taken away by the improper conduct of the farmers who rented the town land. They complained that the farmers drove their cattle through the drift, instead of along the high road; that, contrary to ancient usage, they watered and layered their cattle in a place called "Bull Nook," to the damage of the Pasture; that they either kept no bull or boar for the freemen's use (as they were bound to do) or such as were not serviceable; that they put their sheep in the meadows soon after Lammas, instead of Michaelmas (as they were entitled to do); that they (the freemen) were discharged from turning their horses into St. Mary's fields according to ancient usage; and they expressed a hope that they might not be compelled to use other than legal means to obtain a remedy for the evils of which they complained. No record informs us of the success of this memorial; though, in the year 1686 it was ordered that if any steers or bullocks were put into the high town pasture they should be impounded—a

<sup>p</sup> Some of these particulars do not appear in the Hall Books; they are copied from "Throsby's *History of the Borough*," pages 155 and 156.

proof that, while the upper burgesses were always prone to encroach on the rights of the lower, they were very ready to resent any irregularities committed by the latter. The system of corporate self-election being now in operation, the aggrieved had no remedy.

We now arrive at the time when a course of proceeding was taken by the Corporation in systematic violation of the rights, real or supposed, of the freemen. This was the enclosure of the South Fields, which had theretofore been unenclosed. The first step was taken at a Common Hall, held on the 9th of July, 1708, when Mr. John Wilkins, Mr. Thomas Ayers, sen., Mr. Foxton, Mr. Bradley, Mr. Lewin, Mr. Denshire, Mr. Pratt, Mr. Headley, and Mr. Willows were appointed to attend the Mayor, whenever he should appoint, to consider the best measures to improve the South Fields, and to report their opinion at the next Hall meeting. In consonance with this order they appear to have reported on the 16th of July; for at the Common Hall on that day, it is recorded, it was the opinion of the majority of the members that it would be to the great improvement of the estate belonging to the Corporation in particular, and the benefit of the freemen in general, to enclose the South Fields. The question was put thus:—Query—Whether it be the opinion of the members now present that it will be to the great improvement of the estate of the Corporation in particular, and to the benefit of the freemen in general, to enclose or lay down to herbage the South Fields lying in the parish of St. Mary?

## YEAS.

John Ludlam, Mayor.  
John Wilkins.  
Samuel Woodland.  
James Annis.  
Arthur Noon.  
Joshua Goodrich.  
Wm. Bunney.  
Francis Lewin  
John Cooper, Ald.  
Roger Lee.  
Will. Topp.  
Tho. Helmsley.  
John Denshir.  
William Wells.  
Matthew Judd.  
Wm. Hammond.  
Edward Palmer.

Humph. Chapman.  
John Newton.  
Robert Headley.  
Thomas Gamble.  
John Dawson.  
Ed. Bracebridge.  
John Guthridge.  
Henry Treen.  
Symon Martin.  
Benj. Guthridge.  
Henry Smith.  
Thos. Ayre, jun.  
Tho. Topp.  
Robert Brewin.  
John Payn.  
Sam. Sympson.  
Tho. Ludlam.

## NOES.

Mr. Wm. Southwell.

Mr. Edm. Cradock.

Mr. John Pratt.

Thus far the party in favour of the enclosure of the South Fields were in almost unopposed supremacy. But they did not proceed precipitately; as it was not until September that they prosecuted their plans further. On the 20th of that month, however, they carried a series of resolutions as follows:

“That (whereas there are Leases of the several farms in South Fields, in the Parish of St. Mary, granted by this Corporation to divers persons, yet unexpired,) from and after the expiration of the said leases, the said farms or South Fields shall be laid down to pasturage, and not be any longer employed in tillage.

“That the said South Fields shall have one General Enclosure.

“That all proposals for taking the whole or parcels of the said South Fields, or other the lands of the Corporation, shall be made in writing, and delivered into the Commissioners, to be by them considered of.

“That no lease or leases shall be absolutely granted at the time they are proposed, but that they shall be then considered of, and determined at the next meeting of the Commissioners.

“That there be immediately an account taken of all the leases of the lands and tenements of this Corporation; to be drawn out into a table and set up in the Hall.”

The freemen being unable openly to resist the doings of the Corporation, some among them had recourse to that kind of opposition which is usual in such cases: they secretly posted up written papers reflecting on the proposed enclosing of the land in question, broke locks, and destroyed posts and rails.<sup>a</sup>

Here, for the present, we leave the subject of the freemen's rights, and the Corporation's treatment of the question, to notice the other local occurrences of the year. On the 11th of July, the Duke of Marlborough and Prince Eugene beat the French with great slaughter, at Oudenarde. Again were all the customary rejoicings enacted in this town, preceded by an address to the Queen, congratulating her majesty on the victory; and a Day of Thanksgiving was fixed (the 19th of August) on which a public feast was provided, to grace which

<sup>a</sup> The Town Accounts show this:

	s.	d.
Paid to John Ogden for crying a reward to them as would discover who broke the Pasture locks and put up papers - - - - -	0	6
Paid Augustin Heaford for one day's work of two men to mend the gate and rails in the Drift-lane - - - - -	2	4
Paid him more, for two posts and one rail, and a piece to line a post - - -	3	0

a brace of bucks were forwarded by the borough members, Sir George Beaumont and Mr. James Winstanley.

In February 1709 there was another Thanksgiving Day for the great victories obtained by the Duke of Marlborough on the continent. The Aldermen and Common Councilmen dined together on the 11th, at a shilling ordinary, at their own expense; but ale was provided at the public cost, with ale for the populace, and kids for bonfires. Any member of the Corporation absent from the dinner was fined as he would be for non-attendance at a Common Hall.

This year the Conduit was taken down and rebuilt. The fabric standing up to this date had been in existence for some years, but was found inadequate for the supply of the wants of the inhabitants. The removal of the building was resolved on at a Common Hall meeting, held on June 13th. In a week after, it had disappeared; the Corporation coming to the conclusion here given on the 20th: "It is ordered, at this Hall, that although 'tis agreed the Conduit shall be removed, yet [it is] not to be removed so far, but that some part of it shall stand upon part of the ground where the old one stood, and the order and manner of such removal to be set out by Mr. Alderman Pares, sen., Mr. Richard Townsend, Mr. Richard Weston, Mr. John Cooper, Mr. Thomas Hemsley, Mr. John Smalley, Mr. William Goadby, and Mr. Roger Lee; and that they, or the major part of them, shall set out the ground, how the same shall be removed, and, as they or the major part of them agree, the same to be handsomely and conveniently made and built up at the discretion of Mr. Mayor; the charges whereof to be paid and defrayed by the Chamberlains, and allowed to them in their accounts, and that the founder's name and other ornaments lately upon the old Conduit be put upon the new one."

The new edifice was built of brick, with stone quoins, in octagonal form, and was heavy in appearance. It merely served as a cover to a leaden cistern, and was standing in the remembrance of some among the readers of this volume.

The enclosure of the South Fields does not seem to have been fully completed, though resolved on before this period; as, at a Common Hall meeting held in October, a large committee selected from the Aldermen and Common Councilmen was appointed to meet and consider what was proper to be done for carrying out the measure, and to report at the next hall after the feast-day.

In November another feast was ordered to be held by way of Thanksgiving for the victories gained by British arms abroad; the bloody but unprofitable victory of Malplaquet, near Mons, having been obtained over the French under Marshals Villars and Boufflers.



On the outward surface of events, the year 1710 was much like that which had preceded it in all that affected the inhabitants. A murder was committed in the locality which must, however, have disturbed the tranquility of the external life of the townspeople. All that is left us concerning the event is a resolution of a Common Hall concerning it, namely, that a reward of five pounds should be given by the Chamberlains to such person or persons as should apprehend William Sadler, "run away for a barbarous murder by him committed upon the body of Capt. Wm. Farnham."

Sometimes the Aldermen quarrelled over their cups. At this date, the White Hart was a favourite place of resort, and the magnates of the day were wont there to unbend from the stateliness which became functionaries so important. Mr. Edward Hood, Mayor, Mr. Alderman Annis, and other Aldermen were thus employing themselves one day in September, when Mr. Alderman Annis insulted his worship. The affair created a sensation, so it was found necessary to lay it before the whole of the Twenty Four; to determine how to deal with it satisfactorily. Accordingly the Aldermen met on the 23rd day of the month, and the result was as follows:—"At this meeting Mr. James Annis, one of the Aldermen of this Borough, being charged with speaking several unmannerly and reproachful words to Mr. Edward Hood, Mayor, and several Aldermen then present at the White Hart, in this Borough, the said Mr. James Annis did at this meeting publicly acknowledge his fault for so doing, and was very sorry for what he then said."

In the year following, no local events occurred beyond those of a merely routine description; and 1712 was not very materially distinguished from its predecessor. In this year the nation was very generally avowing itself in favour of bringing to a conclusion the war with France, to which the Tories were opposed (in great part because the great Whig general, Marlborough, and his friends, had been identified with it), and the Queen's Ministry were now endeavouring to bring about peace. The Tory Corporation of Leicester in support of their party, now in power, resolved on sending a humble address to her Majesty, in acknowledgment of her "extraordinary condescension in communicating to her people the terms" upon which a general peace might be had, and entrusted their address to the Borough Members for presentation.

Mr. Alderman Wilkins (the originator of the Waterworks scheme) was at this date [1713] the ruling genius of the "body politique." Of him Throsby says, in his volume on the History of Leicester,\* "It was reported that the Corporation were jealous of his abilities,"

\* Page 180.

and that he “found means to detach some property of the Corporation. He persuaded his brethren to part with some land in different places, for a consideration he held forth; part of which he resold to St. Mary’s parish, to build a workhouse with garden-ground.” It was probably the property here referred to which is mentioned in the following minute of the Corporation, made at their meeting held on February 9:—“Some differences being between the Mayor, Bailiffs, and Burgesses of this Borough, and Mr. John Wilkins, one of the Aldermen, about the title to some land in St. Mary’s Field, where brick-kilns formerly have been, the determination of that difference is referred to Mr. Thomas Noble, Mr. Simon Barwell, and Mr. John Watts, or any two of them, as arbitrators, to hear and determine the said differences. And this day arbitration bonds were sealed, and the award to be made on or before the 24th day of June next.”

That day passed by, however, without the fulfilment of the order; and Mr. Alderman Wilkins remained thus long undisturbed by his difference with the Corporation.

By the treaty of Utrecht, signed on the 30th of March, peace was concluded with France, after a war of about ten years’ duration. On the 5th of May, peace was proclaimed amid general rejoicings; and, on the day following, the Leicester Corporation forwarded an address to the Queen, congratulating her Majesty upon the event. On the 8th of June, the Corporation met to prepare for the celebration of a Day of Thanksgiving. A Tory ministry was then in office. The authorities of this town recorded their sentiments upon their books thus: “It is ordered at this Hall that Tuesday, the 16th day of this instant June, being a day appointed for a Thanksgiving to Almighty God, for the peace which her Majesty hath, by his blessing, and *the care and industry of her faithful ministry*, obtained with France,—that the same shall be duly observed and kept. And that there shall be an Ordinary, and such rejoicings made, as Mr. Mayor shall think fit, for the greater solemnity of the day. All which charges and expenses shall be defrayed and paid by the Chamberlains at the Corporation charge, to be allowed them again upon their accounts passing.” In July, the rejoicings were repeated, as, at a Common Hall held on the 3rd of that month, it was ordered that Mr Chamberlain Ludlam “provide a hundred yards of good white ribbon to be made into cockades for the two Companies, Officers, and Clergy, &c., to wear on their hats on the Thanksgiving Day for the peace.” Thus did the Jacobite Corporation, with its white cockades exhibited, testify its favour to the Pretender. And to win the applause of the populace, they made the new conduit run with ale and wine on the day of their

festivities. The Chamberlains' Accounts thus place the circumstance on record :<sup>s</sup>

The wine and ale were drunk amid the din of kettle drums and the flourish of trumpets, and there was a procession in which the woolcombers figured largely—all of which particulars are indicated in the Town Accounts.

On the 13th of August there was a Common Hall meeting, when it was resolved that ten pounds should be paid by the Chamberlains towards a Town Plate, to be run for at the next horse race in the Abbey Meadow. Hitherto, it will be remembered, the sum of only two pounds was allowed by the Corporation for a similar purpose.

In March, 1714, a great jubilation of the customary description took place, to celebrate the Queen's Inauguration and the proclaiming of the peace with Spain. Wine, ale, and tobacco were provided at the Gainsborough, and kids and coals for bonfires.

At this time, the Saturday Market Place was not an open area, as in the present day; there being rows of shops and sheds standing as fixtures in it, which were let to the shoemakers, glovers, and others. On April 16th a resolution was arrived at relative to these structures, as follows :—

“It is ordered at this Hall that the three rows of shops and sheds in the Saturday Market shall be pulled down, and one good row of double shops built as much in the middle as can be, from the Saturday Market Place towards the Cornwall; and that there be a number of the Commissioners appointed for to agree by the great with workmen for the building of it; and the persons appointed are as followeth—Mr. Mayor, Mr. Townsend, Mr. Ayre, Mr. Annis, Mr. Lee, Aldermen; and John Guthridge, William Page, present Chamberlains, and to meet on Monday next, and as often after as they shall see occasion. And what they shall agree of with any workmen, to be paid for by the Chamberlains, and allowed again upon their accounts passing.”

Besides these shops and sheds, there were shops under the balcony at the Gainsborough—two at the corners of the building, and three tenanted by “cobblers”—let on lease for twenty-one years to William Spencer, woolcomber, in the year 1714.

Examples of self-renunciation are uncommon among Aldermen and Common Councilmen. To strip themselves of their dignity and disfranchise themselves, are efforts of more than ordinary disinterested-

£. s. d.

* Paid Thomas Davy for a vessel to put the wine in at the Conduit, looking after it, and drawing two hogsheads of ale	-	-	-	-	0	4	0
Paid Thos. Hall for 12 gallons of wine at 6s. 8d. the gallon, used at the Conduit	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
					4	0	0

ness and self-sacrifice on their part: they are evidences of exalted sentiment worthy of admiration. Such, on a first view, would be the conclusion of the reader, on meeting with this Order, made at a Common Hall, held on July 12, 1714: "That, at the request of Mr. John Wilkins, Alderman, Mr. Thomas Ayres, Alderman, Mr. William Goadby, Alderman, Francis Young, James Norris, sen., Robert Lord, Robert Headley, William Orton (mercier), John Coates, sen. (baker), Mr. Thomas Ayres, jun., Hugh Jordain, and Mr. John Cooper, Alderman, all freemen of this Borough, they shall be disfranchised, dismissed, and discharged from the freedom of the said Borough, and writings of disfranchisement were at this Hall sealed, and they and every of them are hereby severally disfranchised, dismissed, and displaced from being Aldermen and Freemen of the said Borough."

As the first-named of these persons is Mr. Alderman Wilkins, the suspicion naturally is, that his voluntary retirement was connected with his differences with the Corporation already mentioned, and that those who were ostracized in his company were his partizans. It is rather surprising to find, at the next ensuing meeting of the Corporation, the whole of these persons reinstated in their offices and freedom. The inference derivable from the proceeding is, that the surrender of office by the retiring parties was a master-stroke of policy, designed to defeat their opponents—the accused persons intending in this way to try the broad issue of confidence or no confidence between themselves and their accusers. Mr. Alderman Wilkins and his friends were victorious.

Seven years after, the Alderman (who had for a series of years held sway in the local senate) came to the end of his career. On his decease, his two sons quarrelled about their father's property, and ultimately died in poverty, having sacrificed the whole of their patrimony. In this way did the property which he had gained by questionable means leave the hands of his representatives.<sup>†</sup>

On the first of August, 1714, "good Queen Anne" died, having reigned twelve years. She was the last sovereign of the Stuart family. By the Act of Settlement, passed in the year 1700, both houses of parliament resolved that the Princess Sophia, Duchess-Dowager of Hanover, and the heirs of her body, being Protestants, should be declared the next in succession to the crown of England, after William and Mary and the Princess Anne, and their descendants. As they died childless, George, the son of the Princess Sophia of Hanover, became the legal possessor of the crown of Great Britain.

<sup>†</sup>Throsby's *History of the Borough*, p. 180.

## CHAPTER III.

ACCESSION OF GEORGE THE FIRST—ITS CELEBRATION IN LEICESTER—  
 THE POPULAR FEELING JACOBITE—THE MAYOR A PUBLIC DEFAULTER  
 —LOCAL ANNIVERSARIES—THE EASTER HUNTING—CORPORATION RESO-  
 LUTIONS AGAINST CANVASSING FOR PUBLIC OFFICES—DEATH OF A  
 MAYOR ON THE DAY OF HIS ELECTION—MURDERS IN LEICESTER—  
 EXTENSIVE HOSIERY ROBBERIES—DISCOVERY OF THE THIEVES—  
 THEIR EXECUTION—CORPORATION PETITION AGAINST THE SOUTH SEA  
 COMPANY'S SCHEME—PUBLIC BALLS IN THE TOWN—CHURCHILL'S  
 DRAGOONS STATIONED IN LEICESTER—NEW SHAMBLES PROVIDED—  
 BARON CARTER CONGRATULATED ON HIS PROMOTION—DEATH OF  
 GEORGE THE FIRST.

GEORGE the First succeeded to the crown in August 1714. His title was strictly elective. He was in Hanover when Queen Anne deceased; that being his home, where he lived very simply, like a German in all his habits. He was now in his fifty-fifth year. He knew very little and cared very little about the constitution, language, and affairs of his new subjects—naturally preferring the seclusion of a private station to the pomp attendant on a monarchial position.

On the third of August George was proclaimed in this town by the authorities, with the attendant rejoicings. Wine and ale were provided for the gentlemen and company present at the ceremony, and a bonfire was lighted in the Market Place in the evening. The Races took place in the Abbey Meadow a week or two after, and a Town Plate of Ten Pounds was given by the Corporation—doubtless in honour of George's accession; and his armorial bearings were set up on the North Gates. His Majesty did not arrive in England until the 18th of September, making his public entry into London on the 20th. He was crowned at Westminster on the 20th of the following month. In Leicester, the day of Coronation was observed with every demonstration of loyalty and pleasure. For the "greater solemnity" of the occasion (as the Hall Book records) the Two Companies met at the Guildhall at ten o'clock in the morning "in their formalities"—in other words, in their flowing gowns, accompanied

by the sergeants bearing the great mace and the little maces—the Mayor (John Pares, Esq.) heading the procession. The body then walked to church in order to hear a sermon suitable to the event; after which they returned to the hall. They were next required “decently to walk from the hall to the White Hart to an Ordinary; the Corporation to allow a bottle of wine between two of all such as shall have tickets that dine, and so much ale as shall be then necessary,” and so much “ale and wine at night at the Gainsborough as Mr. Mayor shall think fit, with bonfires and other demonstrations suitable to the occasion.” The Mayor (evidently a Whig) ordered the Waits to play two entire days—a performance in addition to that of the drummers who filled the Market Place with discordant echoes.

Early in the ensuing year (January 20) a Day of Thanksgiving for his Majesty’s peaceable and happy accession to the throne was observed, and was celebrated in the same way as the Coronation, by a sermon, followed by an Ordinary at the White Hart—one hundred and twenty bottles of wine and a hogshead of ale being specially ordered—with bonfires for the evening.

In March a General Election happened. In the county a contest took place between Sir Thomas Cave, Bart., of Stanford Hall, and Sir Geoffrey Palmer, Bart., of Carlton Curliu, two Jacobites on the one side, and Justice Byrd of Claybrooke, a Hanoverian, on the other. The latter named gentleman was very unpopular, for the mob were very generally partisans of the exiled family; so that during the canvass they shouted this distich:

“Palmer and Cave!  
Byrd’s a knave.”

But the unsuccessful Whig was long remembered in Guthlaxton Hundred in connection with another event: While the election was proceeding, a high wind occurred, which blew down the spire of Lutterworth church, and Mrs. Dickman from the foot causeway into the town ditch in Church Gate, Leicester, when she was on her way to church; tearing the lead also from the roofs of the churches, and inducing the terrified worshippers to quit the buildings during divine service. This tempest was called “Byrd’s Wind.”

On May 28 there was the usual rejoicing, and in the last week of July a twelvepenny Ordinary at the Angel, to celebrate the king’s accession. A loyal address was presented to the king in August by Sir George Beaumont; yet underneath all this outward profession there was a great leaven of Jacobitism. In Leicester there were many who heard with secret pleasure of the Earl of Mar’s rising in Aberdeenshire, where he proclaimed the Pretender by the name

of James VIII. The municipal authorities cautiously recorded their proceedings, and their rough papers and draughts of the date ceased to be preserved after the year 1710, or there would probably have been evidences forthcoming of their adhesion to the cause of the Pretender, whom they expected to see soon occupying the place of the Hanoverian elector. The populace (alluding to the rural occupations of the king's family, whom they considered to be German farmers) in disparagement of them sang doggrel songs, of which only fragments have reached us. They would hum such lines as these as they strolled through the streets :

" We will give them hoe and sprittle  
And send them big and little  
To hoe their turnip lands again."

During September and October, 1715, the rebellion made considerable progress ; but on the 13th of November, General Forster surrendered to General Willis, at Preston in Lancashire, and the rising was virtually defeated, although the Earl of Mar fought the Duke of Argyle on the very same day at Dumblaine.

Leicester was too remote to witness the conflicts themselves or the proceedings attendant on them ; but the town was made conscious of serious importance were in progress, as the Chamberlains' accounts of the year suggest, by items such as these :

	£.	s.	d.
Paid Wm. Berry for guiding the soldiers to Polesworth	-	0	3 0
Paid James Croxtall for a lamp for the guard-room	-	0	1 6
Paid a guide for going four times to Ashby with the soldiers and horse-hire and expenses	-	0	15 6
Paid Webster for horse-hire for one of the Scotch prisoners	-	0	1 6
Paid Jervis and Tucker for a team for the Scotch prisoners	-	0	8 0
Paid Job Middleton for three horses for the Scotch prisoners	-	0	4 6

Several other teams were hired to go to Loughborough, where no doubt the prisoners were transferred to them, in order to be passed on to the metropolis. A body of soldiery was also quartered here in October ; as on the day of commemorating the Coronation (the 20th) the commissioned officers were invited to the Ordinary at Mr. Simon Martin's (the White Horse).

The Duke of Rutland visited the town about the 22nd of November, in his capacity of Lord Lieutenant, when he was met in Belgrave Gate by the Mayor and Aldermen in their robes of office, and conducted by them to his inn—his purpose being probably connected with the measures taken to prepare for checking any extension of the rebellion.

The year 1716 was comparatively uneventful in this locality. It was the year in which the rebel lords and others were executed. An address to the king was agreed upon at a Common Hall held on the 25th of May, and Thanksgiving Day was observed on the 7th of June. In August, the Duke of Rutland made a present towards the Town Plate, to be run for at the Races.

In 1717 there were troops quartered in Leicester for some purpose not now known; but on the king's return to England in January, after a visit to Hanover, twenty gallons of ale were allowed to each troop, when the Mayor and Aldermen had a demonstration on account of the event.

One of those untoward cases which sometimes occur in connection with public bodies and their members happened about this period. In the August of 1713 the accounts of Messrs. Gamble and Lambert, the Town Chamberlains, were examined, when it was found that a balance was due to the Corporation, from a late Mayor, amounting to £67 2s. 10d., which he was ordered to pay. In addition to this, he was required, before the 29th of September, to pay over to the Mayor (Jonathan Cooper, Esq.) £32 6s. due from him to the Corporation, for money he had received on bonds. Should he fail to meet the demand (the two sums amounting to £99 8s. 10d.) the Corporation resolved that the ex-Mayor should be sued for the total in legal manner. At a Common Hall held on the day fixed for the payment, the Corporation agreed that £20 should be allowed to him, out of the money he owed, in consideration of the great charges to which he was put during the year of his mayoralty. On the 8th of March, 1714, the balance still remained undischarged, and a detailed statement of the ex-Mayor's liabilities was then prepared, which represented him to be in debt to the Corporation £168 13s.; against which were to be set off various sums, altogether amounting to £85 4s. 2d.; leaving a balance due by him of £83 8s., for the liquidation of which the ex-Mayor gave a bond to the Chamberlains. The affair remained unsettled in March 1716, when the Common Hall ordered that unless the defaulter gave such security as should be approved of, his bond should be sued, and he also, for the balance of his account for Sir Thos. White's money. A month or more elapsing, without effect, the Corporation (evidently desirous of manifesting as much forbearance as possible to an old colleague) gave further time to the ex-Mayor, and allowed him to assign over to some other person the farm he held under them in the South Fields. He, however, was still behindhand; so that in August Mr. Noble, the Town Solicitor, was instructed to bring an action against him to recover the debt. On November 7th the Common Hall gave the alderman liberty to



assign his lease of the farm in St. Mary's Field to his brother. The matter was terminated (April 9, 1718) by the Corporation taking 10s. in the pound on their debt; and, on the same day, the Court of Aldermen discharged their brother from any further attendance at their meetings.

It may be recorded, in order to show what was the ancient jurisdiction of the Corporation over the Soar, that on May 14, 1718, it was agreed at a Common Hall that "Robert Flower, miller of the Castle Mills, shall be sent to, for him to take down the bricks lately laid at the stone weirs, and to make the same as low as usually was: the keeping the waters high is a great prejudice to the Swanns Mill and the meadows thereabouts: if he refuses, that he be sued." From this entry, it is evident the Corporation assumed they had a right to exercise authority over the river, and this was unquestionably of ancient origin.

Like the festivals of the Roman Catholic Church, in their regular recurrence, were the old civic festivities of our ancestors; though, instead of Saints' days, they had days of commemoration of historical events. Thus, it will be recollected by the reader that on May 28th, in the reign under notice, the municipal authorities celebrated the king's birthday, and, on the day following, the Restoration of King Charles the Second—contradictory observances, when it is remembered that the Hanoverian dynasty had supplanted that of the Stuarts; but the Jacobite Aldermen probably satisfied their consciences by keeping up "Royal Oak Day" in this manner. Thus, it has been recorded, they observed the day of George's accession in June or July, as a Day of Thanksgiving. Thus in August, they held the Venison Feast, in order to keep in remembrance the defeat of the Spanish Armada; and on such occasions the Whig Duke of Rutland, the Whig Earl of Stamford, Earl Ferrers, Sir. Geo. Beaumont, and the Whig Mr. Winstanley, one or all, sent a fat buck to make the banquet, and to gain favour with the "body politique." Thus, on the 20th of October, they yearly kept up the anniversary of the Coronation. Besides which, there were the Races, held in September, in the Abbey Meadow; and there was the Mayor's Feast, held shortly after his election on September 21st; followed by the swearing-in at the Castle on the Monday after Martinmas Day.

Nor were these all the "red-letter days" of the period—the most popular festivity of the year was the Easter Hunting. Its character shows how slight a cause served to render Leicester men merry in the days of the last Stuarts and the first Georges. On Easter Monday,<sup>a</sup> the Mayor and his brethren, in their scarlet gowns, attended

<sup>a</sup> Throsby's *History of the Borough*, p. 166.

by their proper officers, in due form, went to Black Annis's Bower Close, where, if the day were fine, the young and the old, and persons of all denominations, assembled. The Spring was welcomed by all in harmony. The morning was passed in amusements of various kinds and athletic exercises. About noon a dead cat, sprinkled with aniseed water, was tied to the tail of a horse, and trailed over the fields in a zigzag course for half an hour; after which, a pack of hounds were directed to the spot where the horse had begun its devious career. Here the dogs gave tongue "in glorious concert." The people who had stationed themselves on the higher ground to watch the hounds following the scent, roared out rapturous applause. The horsemen dashed after the hounds, through foul passages and over fences, emulous to get the lead of their fellows. As the cat had been dragged to the Mayor's door, through the principal streets of the town, hounds and horsemen followed. The hunt being over, his Worship invited his friends to a "treat" at his house, and thus the day ended. The historian who had witnessed the Easter Hunting says of it: "It was a scene upon the whole of joy—the governing and the governed, in the habits of freedom enjoying together an innocent and recreating amusement, serving to unite them in bonds of mutual friendship, rather than to embitter their days with discord and disunion."

Some abuse seems to have crept into the observance of the holiday in the reign of George the First; as at a Common Hall held in September 1718, upon the motion of Mr Mayor, it was ordered that "for the future at the Hunting Feast, which is yearly on Easter Monday, the Company of the Twenty Four in their formalities do attend Mr. Mayor into the field, if the weather permit, according to the ancient custom, and what entertainment shall be given that day shall be *at the charge of the Mayor only*, upon the forfeiture of £20 (the late additional salary)."

The year 1719 was locally remarkable for no event worthy of special notice. The townspeople witnessed the falling of an extraordinary meteor, about eight o'clock one evening in March. It appeared like a ball of fire, and seemed to fall to the earth, to the great surprise of the spectators.

The ale-drinking Aldermen of the day and their friends *had* consciences—they felt that there must be a "line drawn somewhere" in reference to the consumption of their favourite beverage at the public expense. At the Venison Feast of 1718, one hogshead of ale had been drunk in this way, and a second followed, which had not been ordered by authority. It was therefore decreed, with becoming gravity, at a Common Hall held on February 1st, 1719, that "Whereas, by

an order of Hall of the nine and twentyeth day of July last, Itt was ordered that one hogshead of ale should be drank at the Venizon Feast the Monday following, And whereas there was then drank another Hogshead without any order, Itt is now agreed that if any Chamberlin for the future shall exceed above tenn Gallons more than what shall be ordered, he shall pay the Expence himself."

All the troubles attendant on being canvassed by the candidates for public situations, which now beset men in official position, were experienced by the Aldermen of Leicester in the days bygone. There must, however, have been some unusual pressure upon them which induced them, in July 1720, to pass the following resolutions :

"Resolved, that on any election of any person for any place or office in this Corporation, the Candidates may apply themselves personally to their respective electors, or by petition in proper form to the Court of Aldermen.

"Resolved, that whosoever shall procure letters or solicitations from any person or persons of what quality soever, to particular Aldermen, thereby to bias or influence them in their votes for any office or place, otherwise than according to the preceding resolution, offers great violence to the freedom of election, and thereby renders himself unworthy of being elected.

"Resolved, that any Alderman or Aldermen, Commoner or Commoners, who shall be solicited by letters or otherwise, by the procurement of any candidate, and shall not immediately acquaint the Mayor for the time being therewith, shall forfeit for the use of the town the sum of ten pounds."

At this period, the Corporation instituted an enquiry into the condition of the houses belonging to the town, as public property, with the intention of rebuilding them; and accordingly in September came to the conclusion to give notice to the tenants to quit on the ensuing Lady Day, before proceeding to carry out their intention. The Corporation expressed their wish to build "convenient small tenements," and appointed Commissioners with full powers to erect them—authorizing them to pay the workmen in notes drawn upon at least four of their number. It may be supposed the town was in need of the class of houses here described, owing to the increase of population, the numbers having risen from 4,530 in the year 1700, to 6,450 in 1712, and to at least 8,000 in 1720.

An event perhaps without a local parallel happened this year. It was one of that class which may be presumed to have startled from their stolid temper even the convivialists of the Corporation; like the presence of a skeleton or a spectre at a banquet. It was this:—In September, on the day appointed, Robert Wingfield, Esq., was elected Mayor for the ensuing twelve months, as the successor of John Ludlam, Esq. The day of the Mayor's Feast came round, and the usual arrangements were made, and no doubt all were expecting to pass a

"jolly" day together in a dull season. It was the 14th of November. But a dark cloud passed over all; for the chief personage for whom the banquet was prepared died that morning.

In this sad emergency, the two companies of Aldermen and Common Councilmen met at the Town Hall, in the course of the morning. They thence proceeded, with the four serjeants carrying the maces upon their arms, in due order to church; the macebearer with the great mace upon his arm going before Mr. Francis Lewin, the senior justice of the Borough. The great mace was laid upon the cushion in the seat where the Mayor would have sat had he been alive; Mr. Lewin taking his place in the next seat by himself. After the sermon, the Corporation returned to the Town Hall, attended by the maces and macebearers, as already described. From the Hall they went to the Duchy Court at the Castle; the maces being then carried before Mr. John Ludlam, as senior Alderman, and Mr. Lewin as senior Justice. The Court was then adjourned to Monday, the one-and-twentieth of November. From the Castle, the procession returned to the Hall, when a debate arose relative to the propriety of convening both companies to a meeting for the election of a new Mayor. It was eventually agreed that, according to the charter, Mr. Ludlam, as senior Alderman, had the power vested in him; but as he was going to London, he appointed Mr. Lewin his deputy.

Three days after (Thursday, the 17th November) the people who were invited went to the late Mayor's house, and thence to St. Mary's Church, the maces being carried by the principal macebearer and serjeants, before the corpse, the pall borne by six Aldermen who had been Mayors, and the mourners following. After the body had been buried, the municipal *cortège* returned, preceding the mourners, to the house of the deceased Mayor.

Mr. Lewin (acting as temporary Mayor) gave orders on the following Saturday for the summoning of the two companies on the next Monday, to meet for the election of a new Mayor, and sat with the other justices to hear complaints.

On Sunday (in conformity with the usages of a period in which pomp was evidently held in supreme regard) the Corporation attended St. Martin's Church, with all the state and in all the paraphernalia of office. The great mace, hung with crape, was laid by itself in the pew, on the cushion, as if to symbolize the authority stripped from the person of the Chief Magistrate; while Mr. Lewin sat alone in the next pew.

On Monday, both companies being assembled, Mr. Edward Hood was chosen Mayor for the remainder of the year, in the room of Mr. Wingfield. In the absence of Mr. Ludlam, senior Alderman, Mr.

Hood, in the presence of the other Aldermen, took the oath of the Mayor and Justice of the Peace, and the oaths of allegiance and supremacy and abjuration, which were administered to him by Lawrence Carter, Esq., Recorder, and one of the Justices of the Peace.

This description is particularly detailed, almost in the words here given, in the Hall Book of the Corporation, and indicates how strongly attached to forms were the people of that day; perhaps, in these minute observances, seeking refuge from the confused emotions which had been raised in their hearts by the sudden and unexpected death of their colleague in the moment of his civic elevation.

About the date of the events last recorded, Leicester was the scene of several tragedies in humble life, which have been briefly mentioned in the pages of a local historian.<sup>v</sup> As no precise year is identified with them, they may be assumed to have occurred between 1720 and 1725.

The first of these transactions was the murder of a wife by a husband. The unhappy pair lived in Thornton Lane. In the night, while his wife slept, the husband (who was a tailor) thrust a fine bod-kin into her ear, and thus murdered her. He was hanged for the crime at the gallows which then stood near the Infirmary.

A second deed of blood was committed by a young woman named Mary Hall. She had reared an orphan niece with tenderest care from infancy. From some unassigned motive, she cut the child's throat; and, with her hands yet dabbled in blood, and holding in one of them the knife which was the instrument she had employed, she presented herself to her father, avowing herself to be the murderess.

At the back of Johnson's Buildings in Southgate Street, near the Water House Pump, lived in a small house a man known by the cognomen "Bull Parker," which sufficiently indicates the popular estimate of his character. He had a quarrel with his wife; and, listening to the horrid promptings of a brutal nature, he inflicted blows with an axe upon her while she was in bed—thus putting her out of existence. When the horrid deed was completed, Parker's first impulse was to abscond; and with this view he set out early in the morning to leave the town in the quarter nearest to the country; but (as he declared) the devil stopped him on the West Bridge, whence he calmly proceeded to the Town Gaol, knocked up the Gaoler, and told him of the crime he had committed. The man was sentenced to die; and while on his way to the gallows, seated in the cart, instead of singing a religious hymn or preparing himself by

<sup>v</sup> Throsby's *History of Leicester*, pp. 146 and 147.

solemn thought for the last moment, he sang the *refrain* of an old ballad :

“A light heart and a thin pair of breeches  
Carry you through the world, my brave boys.”

With Parker was hanged poor Mary Hall at the same place—the gallows near the Infirmary.

After having been located for forty years in Leicester, the Hosiery Manufacture had become largely extended. In the Winter Season of one of the years above named, several warehouses were broken open, and goods taken away therefrom ; some of them being packed at the inns for the carriers and conveyed to a distance, to places unknown to those who suffered the loss of their property. Watchmen were appointed to guard the warehouses, and dogs were placed in some while men slept in others, in order to detect, if possible, the guilty parties ; but without effect, as the robberies continued unchecked through succeeding winters.

The perpetrators of the robberies were discovered in a purely accidental manner. There was then living in the town a man whom his neighbours nicknamed “Tangle Harris.” He was often employed to carry out frames to stockingmakers and to bring coals from the pits. He was a stout, courageous fellow, not very easily mastered or intimidated, as the sequel will indicate. One dark morning, about two o’clock, he was going by St. Mary’s Church, on his way to the lanes or meadows where his horses were grazed, when he heard some person in the graveyard. He then shouted out “Who’s there ?” The answer was “Go look !” “Then,” rejoined Harris, “I’ll be d—d if I don’t know who you are ;” and he immediately advanced towards the unknown person, in order to seize him by the collar. A blow was then aimed at Harris, with a spade, by the man who had spoken ; but the blow fortunately missed him. Undaunted, Harris sprang forward and seized his assailant, meanwhile seeing a second man run away. Harris dragged into the town, to a constable’s, the man whom he had secured ; who proved to be either an apprentice or journeyman to a Mr. Carr, a hosier living in St. Nicholas’s Street, near the Church. His name was Sutton. As great rewards had been offered for the detection of the robbers, and Harris thought he was in the right track, without loss of time he went to Carr’s house, after having given Sutton into custody. He contrived to effect an entrance and found Carr in bed ; but his shoes standing by the bedside were quite warm, as if only recently taken off. Carr was then apprehended. In the hope of saving his life, Carr confessed to the robberies. In vain, however, as at the ensuing Assizes both prisoners

were convicted on clear circumstantial evidence, and were shortly after executed.

It transpired, in the course of the trial, that when Sutton was captured, he and his master were employed in burying in the graveyard goods which they had that night stolen. Carr (who had previously had a fair reputation) was in the habit of taking the stockings to London for sale, and thus eluded detection. The townspeople felt much compassion for Sutton, who was young and handsome.

The South Sea Company originated its scheme in the year 1720, and blew its "bubble" so successfully, by the promise of enormous dividends and other infamous arts, that the stock on which £100 was paid up sold for £1,000. In consequence, the whole nation became stockjobbers, and people neglected their professions and employments in pursuit of chimeras; just as, at a later date, the people of England were carried away by the Railway Mania, and are now occasionally deluded into speculative undertakings either to their bitter disappointment or utter undoing. Before the close of the year, the South Sea Company collapsed; and in the commencement of 1721 Parliament interfered in the matter by enquiry and in other ways. At this time, the Corporation of Leicester addressed the House of Commons on the subject, at great length, the following being a copy of their petition:

"To the Honourable the House of Commons of Great Britain in Parliament assembled.

"The Humble Petition of the Mayor, Bailiffs, and Burgesses of the Borough of Leicester,

"Sheweth,

"That though by indulgent Providence your Petitioners are clear of the South Sea project, and neither tainted with the guilt of contriving, nor hurt by giving credit to, the late cursed impostures, yet we are sharers in the national calamity which involves all (the wicked authors only excepted) whose successful crimes have raised them above the reach of ordinary justice, and left nothing to fear, or us to hope, but from the legislative power—with utmost resignation, therefore, to the justice and wisdom of this Honourable House, our most deplorable fate and condition are represented.

"No sooner had the South Sea Directors and the vile emissaries they detached over the kingdom (to propagate lies and forgeries) so imposed upon the honest, credulous people, as to draw all their ready money and treasure into their infamous hands, but we saw trade instantly struck dead, our manufactures disregarded, our combed wool (once the staple and the glory of our industrious corporation) lie neglected in our workhouses, our poor increasing for want of employment, and many who cheerfully paid taxes towards supporting our happy government reduced by a want of trade to a miserable exemption from them.

“ And, as if these did not amount to a sufficient measure of evils, we are alarmed with yet more to come, and threatened that the sole relief to an almost despairing people, the single recompense for all their sufferings, shall be attempted to be wrested from them, namely, the seven millions due by contract from the South Sea Company towards payment of public debts, and relaxing part of those taxes which the people have long borne, (and now, weakened and impoverished by South Sea schemes, are unable to sustain,) shall be sacrificed to that Company, to raise high again their fatal credit, revive stockjobbing, and pour out the last drop of the nation's blood to be licked up by the cannibals of Change Alley.

“ Such a project (were it possible it could succeed) for confirming perpetual debts, mortgages, and taxes, upon a people deploring already their hard fate under undeserved miseries, would give (we humbly apprehend) an incurable wound to trade and national credit, heighten their griefs into despair, shock their steady affections to this good government, and animate its enemies to further attempts.

“ But under the protection of so just and wise a Parliament, the scourge of wicked avarice, we have nothing to fear from such wild, destructive schemes, and nothing to petition for, but that this Honourable House would proceed, with the spirit and justice they have begun, to disappoint every mischievous enterprise and avaricious design, and bring to condign punishment all who shall be found conspiring to enrich themselves by the undoing of their country.

“ So shall public faith and credit be re-established on their foundations—justice and strict observance of contracts; honest trade, released from heavy impositions which have so long depressed it, raise its head, and contend with success against its knavish rival, stockjobbing; poverty, and with it discontent, vanish; and our gracious sovereign, King George, reign over a once more prosperous and happy people, as able as willing by large supplies to promote both his Majesty's glory and safety.

“ And your petitioners, &c.”

Both Houses of Parliament interfered in an attempt to mitigate the calamities consequent on the winding up of the scheme, and in taking proceedings to punish the directors, whose estates were confiscated by Act of Parliament, towards making good the damages sustained by the Company. By the vigorous measures carried out, it was soon in a condition to fulfil its engagements with the public, and the credit of the nation was restored.

In the reign of George the First, the old Town Hall was still the only room where theatrical performances could take place, or public entertainments be given. It seems to have been too freely allowed to be used for such purposes; as, at a Common Hall held in 1722, the Corporation found it necessary to place its letting under their own immediate control. They accordingly ordered that “the present Mayor and all future Mayors shall not let the Town Hall to any



players for any shows whatever, nor to any dancing masters for balls, without the consent of a Common Hall."

The country was at this period in a state of great political agitation, owing to the machinations of the Jacobites. Here, as in other towns, the authorities and the populace, being partizans of the Pretender, were strongly disaffected to the Government. In May, the king received full information of a conspiracy formed against him, and on the 10th of June there were disturbances in this town; of which we have no particulars, owing to the destruction of the papers of the Corporation relating to it; but the body felt it necessary to send a loyal address to the king in August, to preserve at least a show of fidelity; and in September the Town Clerk went to London, with copies of the examinations of witnesses concerning the disturbances, in order to lay them before Lord Carteret, one of the Secretaries of State.

The first mention of a public ball, in the records of the town, occurs in November 16, when, in accordance with the resolution above quoted, it was agreed by the Corporation "that Mr. Tyrrell, the Dancing Master, shall have the use of the Hall for his Ball at this season, he setting nothing but forms and chairs upon the ground, and making good any damage that may happen." On the 28th of the same month, a similar assembly was held in the Castle. Dining in the middle of the day, the fashionable people of the time could then attend a ball at an hour at which now the same class has not even thought of dressing for dinner; as the card of notification here inserted indicates:

"A BALL  
At the Castle in Leicester,  
On the 28th day of November 1722.  
THOMAS HODGSON,  
MASTER.  
No admittance after  
4 o'clock."

For reasons which will appear obvious, after what has been already stated, the Government this year stationed a regiment of dragoons in Leicester under Colonel Churchill; the evidence supplied to Lord Carteret by the Town Clerk having probably proved the existence in this town of a considerable number of sympathizers with the conspiracies of the Jacobite party. At the same time, the Rev. Mr. Jackson was occupying the post of Confrater to Wigston's Hospital. There was this peculiarity attached to the appointment: it was held by patent from the Chancellor of the Duchy of Leicester, and involved no obligation to subscribe to articles of religion. Mr. Jackson being what (in modern times) would be called a Broad Churchman, was

thus enabled to preach his opinions with impunity, and by ancient right he could fill the pulpit of St. Martin's every Sunday, Wednesday, and Friday. He objected to subscription to articles, to the ordinary view of the Atonement, and to the eternal duration of future punishments: in fact, he promulgated views which are not unknown to the parishioners of St. Martin's after the lapse of a century and a half, and which seem to cling to the locality.

The dragoons were encamped near the town, and on Sundays it is likely were required to attend service at St. Martin's Church. It was on one of these occasions Mr. Jackson preached a sermon to them "upon the duties of subjects to their governors," which occasioned considerable public discussion and excitement; being evidently directed against the political proceedings of the local Jacobites. It may have been that the sermon was preached on the Venison Feast day, as the Corporation came to this conclusion on the 26th of June: "Ordered, that the Venison Feast in commemoration of the Spanish Invasion, be at the Horse and Trumpet, on the said first day of August next, and that the officers of Colonel Churchill's Regiment now quartered here be invited to it, and the Ordinaries paid for by the Chamberlains, and that both Companies meet at the Town Hall, and go to church with Mr. Mayor, and from thence to dinner, where a hogshead of ale is to be drunk and paid for by the Chamberlains."

If the Corporation are not belied, their strong attachment to the cause of the Chevalier led them into notorious partisan excesses. They were accused (and it would seem not without reason) of open disaffection to King George, and of choosing members from among the lower orders of the people of the meanest character and abilities, contrary to the express letter of their charters; to the exclusion of persons attached to the reigning family, possessing good fortunes, and competent to the honourable fulfilment of municipal offices.

In the year 1724, beyond the usual routine observances, and proceedings taken in connection with the framework-knitters and glovers, nothing remarkable occurred, except on June 12; on which day, at two o'clock in the afternoon, an awful cloud filled with lightning, accompanied with incessant thunder, discharged itself over Leicester. The inhabitants were terrified beyond description, believing the end of the world had arrived.\* Between the flashes of lightning a darkness, as of night, overspread the earth, and men and beast trembled with dread. Hailstones (some of which measured six inches round) fell in amazing quantities; and the ripening fruits of the garden were almost entirely destroyed.

Early in 1726, the Corporation interested themselves in the improve-

\* Throsby's *History of Leicester*, p. 148.

ment of the turnpike between Market Harborough and Loughborough. They not only petitioned Parliament for a bill to enable them to repair the road, but (February 12) borrowed £150 to defray the charges of carrying the bill through the legislative ordeal.

It was the mediæval custom in Leicester to require butchers to sell their meat at a public shambles: they were not permitted to sell it in their own houses—a prohibition enforced alike for sanitary reasons as for the sake of public convenience. The ancient shambles were located at different places at different periods. At the close of the seventeenth century (1682 to 1700) they stood at the lower end of the street leading from High Street to St. Nicholas's Church, to which they gave a name—Shambles Lane. In March 1726, the Corporation appointed a committee to survey the buildings, and value the materials, and obtain plans and elevations of new shambles; so that in case they came to the resolution to take down the old buildings and erect new shambles, they might ascertain the cost of so doing, and report on the subject to a future meeting. In July the Common Hall arrived at the following resolution: "That the shambles be pulled down and rebuilt according to the plan drawn by Mr. John Wesley, and now produced; the windows to be made proportionably higher, and that the gentlemen appointed to survey the same by order of hall of the 30th of March last do agree with workmen to perform the same."

Lawrence Carter, Esq., the Recorder of this borough for more than thirty years, was appointed one of the Barons of the Court of Exchequer in 1727. He resided in Leicester, in the house in the Newarke still standing on the site of the ancient Collegiate Church. The Corporation ordered the Town Clerk to wait on the Baron on their behalf in February, to congratulate him on his advancement. In April, the Mayor and Aldermen in a body visited Baron Carter's house, for the same purpose; forwarding to it, at the same time, a present of five dozen of wine and three pounds and a half of sweetmeats.

In March an address on the juncture of affairs at that time—an invasion being threatened by the Emperor of Russia and the King of Spain—was prepared at the request of the Corporation, and despatched to Mr. Boothby Scrimshire, one of the Borough Members, for presentation to the king.

In June, George the First died, aged 67, after a reign of nearly thirteen years. He left a son, George Augustus (his successor), and a daughter, Sophia Dorothea, the Queen of Prussia.

## CHAPTER IV.

GEORGE THE SECOND'S ACCESSION—ITS PROCLAMATION—THE CORPORATION AND OATH-TAKING—THE CORONATION—NON-ATTENDANCE AT THE HALL MEETINGS—VISIT OF GRECIAN PRINCES TO LEICESTER—THE STRUGGLE FOR TOWN FREEDOM—VISIT OF THE PRINCE OF THE MUSCOVITES—BIRTH OF A PRINCE OF WALES—DISPUTE RESPECTING THE APPOINTMENT OF GAOLER—THE BOWLING-GREEN FINISHED—VISIT OF THE CORPORATION TO BRADGATE—THE TRICK OF THE RESURRECTIONIST—THE RACES IN ST. MARY'S FIELD—THE FREEMEN AND THE ABBEY MEADOW—ORIGIN OF THE THREE CROWNS INN—A FIRE BRIGADE INSTITUTED—A CELEBRATED HORSE RACE.

GEORGE the Second was in the forty-fourth year of his age when he ascended the throne of England. In 1705 he had espoused the Princess Wilhelmina Charlotte Caroline, daughter to the Marquis of Brandenburg Anspach; by whom he had two sons—Frederick Louis and William Augustus,—and five daughters, one of whom married the king of Denmark.

Six days after the decease of George the First, a Common Hall meeting was held in Leicester, at which it was Ordered "that since it has pleased Almighty God to call to his mercy our late sovereign Lord George, this Hall doth attend the High Sheriff in their formalities to proclaim the high and mighty Prince George, Prince of Wales, our only lawful and rightful liege lord, George the Second, by the grace of God, king of Great Britain, France, and Ireland, Defender of the Faith; and that there be a bonfire, and as much wine and ale given away as the Mayor shall think fit."—On the 3rd of July an address of congratulation to his Majesty was sealed at a Common Hall, and ordered to be sent for presentation to Sir Geo. Beaumont, one of the Borough Members.

At this meeting, also, a portion of the Corporation took the oaths of allegiance and supremacy and abjuration. These, it may be presumed, were the thoroughly loyal; while those who refrained from taking the oaths may be suspected of Jacobitism. Exceptions to these remarks there may have been, of Corporators unable to attend

owing to ill health and other causes ; but as a whole the absentees were doubtless disaffected to the reigning family. These are the names of the Aldermen and Common Councilmen who swore allegiance to George the Second and abjured the Pretender :

## ALDERMEN.

John Guthridge, Esq., Mayor.

Mr. Edward Hood.	Mr. Joseph Goodrich.
Mr. John Cooper.	Mr. John Newton.
Mr. Thomas Helmsley.	Mr. Thomas Gamble.
Mr. Wm. Hammond.	Mr. Richard Roberts.
Mr. Humphrey Chapman.	Mr. Edward Howkins.
Mr. Thomas Ludlow.	

## COMMON COUNCILMEN.

John Willows,	Richard Ogden.
William Bushfield,	Samuel Belton.
Chamberlains.	Saul Broadhurst.
John Dawson.	William Birstall.
Augustus Heaford.	John Grocock.
Samuel Simpson.	John Winter.
John Erpe.	Thomas Davye.
Richard Goodall.	William Whatton.
Thomas Bass.	Joseph Newton.
Thomas Johnson.	Miles Roberts.
William Lee.	Chas. Coulston.
John Cartwright.	Thomas Johnson.
John Roberts.	Edmund Johnson.
Samuel Miles.	

The absentees who failed to take the oaths and to abjure the Pretender were :—

## ALDERMEN.

Mr. Thomas Bradley.	Mr. Wm. Page.
Mr. Arthur Noon.	Mr. Simon Martin.
Mr. John Pares.	Mr. Henry Smith.
Mr. Thomas Ayres.	Mr. Gabriel Newton.
Mr. Thomas Lambert.	Mr. George Bent.
Mr. Robert Headley.	

## COMMON COUNCILMEN.

Thomas Willows.	William Higginson.
Richard Jordan.	John Brown.
Thomas Orme.	Edward Veasey.

Edward Noon.	John Veasey.
William Lewin.	Richard Garle.
William Cooke.	Edward Harris.
Jos. Goodrich.	John Wilson.
John Noon.	Robert Lee.
Edward Bates.	Edmund Ludlam.
William Noon.	Joseph Taylor.
Thomas Miles.	Richard Denshire.

Here, then, we have a clear division of the well-affected and the disaffected members of the Corporation ; subject to the qualification already stated.

The day of the Coronation was appointed to be the 11th of October. In anticipation, the Corporation met on the 29th of September, and passed this resolution : “ Wednesday, the 11th day of October next, being by proclamation appointed for the Coronation of their Majesties, King George and his royal consort Queen Caroline—for the greater solemnity of the day, it is ordered at this Hall that both Companies shall meet at the Hall by ten of the clock in the morning, in their formalities, to go to Church with Mr. Mayor to hear the sermon, and return with him to the Hall, and then decently to walk to the White Hart, to a twelpenny ordinary, to be prepared for that purpose ; the Corporation to allow a bottle of wine between two, to all such that dine and shall have tickets, every person to pay his own ordinary, and the Corporation to allow as much ale as Mr. Mayor shall think fit and necessary ; and so much ale and wine at the Gainsborough at night as Mr. Mayor shall think fit, with bonfires and other demonstrations of joy suitable to the occasion ; the same to be paid for by the Chamberlains, and allowed them in their accounts.”

On the same occasion the dragoons, who were in the town, were invited to take part in the celebration, by drawing up on the Corn Wall—the eastern side of the Market Place—and by firing volleys. One guinea was presented to each troop to drink the health of their majesties.

For several years after the accession of George the Second, very little beyond the usual routine of municipal business and periodical festivities seems to have occupied the attention of the townspeople. There were every year dinners and bonfires to celebrate the return of the king’s birthday and the queen’s birthday, and the day of the Coronation ; and there were the Races, accompanied by balls, or by plays acted in the old Guildhall ; but beyond these, no circumstances of public interest happened.

The municipal body provided a remedy for the non-attendance of its members at its usual meetings ; but it was an extreme measure.

In January 1728 a case occurred when it was enforced. At a Court of Aldermen, Thomas Willows and Richard Johnson (whose names appear in the second of the foregoing lists), having neglected for some years to attend at the Hall Meetings, though daily summoned and bound by their oaths to be present, were for their "contempts and ill examples" discharged from being Common Councilmen of this borough.

The visit to Leicester of two remarkable persons took place in 1730. On August 15, Joseph Abaisir and John Hemmer, princes of Mount Lybanus, in Syria, came to the town. They were presented with ten guineas by the Corporation. They travelled from Nottingham to Leicester; and after staying here a day, they were conducted and guarded to Coventry at the town's expense, pursuant to the royal injunction. In the Chamberlains' Accounts these personages are designated "Grecian Princes," being thus mentioned :

	£.	s.	d.
Paid the Grecian Princes by order of Hall	-	-	10 10 0
Paid for their charges at the Crane	-	-	2 11 3
Paid for the charges going to Coventry with them	-	-	2 13 1

It may sound strange in the ears of the reader that these visitors to our shores should require guards to accompany them to Coventry; but the state of the country was such that they absolutely needed the protection provided. A historian tells us "England was at this period infested with robbers, assassins, and incendiaries, the natural consequences of degeneracy, corruption, and the want of police in the interior government of the kingdom. . . . The peculiar depravity of the times was visible even in the conduct of those who preyed on the Commonwealth: thieves and robbers were now become more desperate and savage than ever they had appeared since manhood was civilized: in the exercise of their rapine, they wounded, maimed, and even murdered the unhappy sufferers, through a wantonness of barbarity."<sup>2</sup>

In the winter of this year the town seems to have been unusually gay, the players having the use of the Town Hall for the season, and the young gentlemen of the town having given an assembly in the Mayor's Parlour.

It will be remembered (see p. 20) that the Woolcombers, by a concession on the part of the Corporation, were enabled to obtain the freedom of the borough at a reduced payment, and thus to carry on their business unmolested; but the Corporation still insisted on preventing any inhabitant from commencing any trade, who had not paid

<sup>2</sup> *History of England* by Hume and Smollett, Valpy's Edition, vol. x., pp. 375, 376.

the usual sum of £20 for obtaining his freedom, and who had not been formally admitted to their body. In the year 1709 Nicholas Tebbutt, a tanner, and Thomas Hewson, sen., Thomas Hewson, jun., William Hewson, and Robert Tugman, joiners, were prosecuted for pursuing their occupations and keeping shops open in the town, without having previously become freemen. In the year following, Thomas Stephens, watchmaker, experienced a similar process. Again, in 1718, Job Stevenson, a tailor, refused to take up his freedom, and endeavoured to follow his trade without this qualification; but he was prosecuted for so doing by the Corporation, who succeeded in checking the efforts of townsmen to effect their emancipation for some years; as it was not until 1730 that the struggle was renewed. In that year Vincent Wing, Samuel Basford, and John Stubbs, glovers, openly set up in business in defiance of the local regulation, and were sued forthwith. Wing and Basford subsequently conformed; but Stubbs maintained his ground, and the case was brought to a legal issue. The local authorities were then called on to make out their case, and on their attempting to do so the ancient borough usages were cited. They appealed to the power given to them under the charter of Elizabeth; to an order made at a Common Hall in the reign of James I.; and to a bye-law bearing date September 1681, to the effect that if any person or persons, not being freemen, should at any time exercise their trades or callings, contrary to ancient custom, he or they should forfeit 20s. to the Mayor, Bailiffs, and Burgesses of the Borough of Leicester, to be recovered by action of debt, bill, or plaint, in any of his Majesty's Courts of Record, or to be levied by distress. The Corporation accordingly proceeded against Stubbs as for a debt, to the amount of the entrance fee for procuring freedom. He pleaded *Nil debet*—he owed nothing. On the trial it was proved that "foreigners" (non-residents) and non-freemen were permitted to use their trades and occupations upon market and fair days, as well as freemen, and therefore the Corporation were non-suited. Stubbs afterwards carried on his trade, without payment for his freedom, and in this way struck one of the last blows at the venerable monopoly.

For four or five years following this date there was absolutely nothing of public interest to record. Among the public amusements, of which the Town Hall was occasionally permitted to be the scene, were tumbling and rope-dancing. In the year 1733, the Hon. George Tomison, the "Prince of the Muscovites," visited the town, and was presented with three guineas by the Corporation. Who he was, it would be difficult to say, after the lapse of so many years; though it



may be suspected he was a travelling impostor, and that the "Grecian Princes" before mentioned were of the same description.

In the year 1738, when Jacobite partisanship was still strong in Leicester, a son was born to the Prince of Wales. This event inflicted a severe discouragement upon the hopes of the friends of the Stuart family, as it so far ensured the continuance of the crown in the hands of the reigning family. The Prince of Wales dying before his father, George the Second, the grandson of the latter succeeded to the throne as George the Third. When the news reached Leicester of the birth of the Prince of Wales's son, the church bells were rung and bonfires lighted in the Market Place; and three weeks after an address was forwarded to the king, congratulating him upon the event.

A controversy arose about this time between the Corporation and Mr. Leonard Piddocke of Ashby-de-la-Zouch, concerning the appointment of a Bridewell-keeper or Gaoler, which it may be desirable here to place on record.

Late in the year 1739, a vacancy had been created in the office, owing to the decease of John Armston. A Court of Aldermen was held to elect his successor, when two candidates were proposed—James Norris and William Johnson—the latter being nominated by Mr. Piddocke, who alleged that he did so on the authority of the Earl of Huntingdon. The votes for the two persons were equal; but Mr. Mayor giving his vote for Norris, he was appointed to the office, permission being granted to widow Armston to remain in possession until Lady Day.

This step having been taken, Mr. Piddocke addressed a letter (of which the following is a copy) to the Mayor:

"Mr. Mayor,

"I am concern'd to hear that the Corporation of Leicester (for which I have the greatest regard) should oppose Mr. Johnson (whom I had appointed the Gaoler of the Borough, and for which appointment I apprehend I have an undoubted right) and proceed to the Election of another Person. You will please to consider, that I alone have the custody of all the Prisoners, and for that purpose all the King's Process's are directed to me, and I alone am answerable for the Escape of such Prisoner. You have your Distinct Nominall Bailiff, but he is nominall, all and no ways as I apprehend answerable for any Misdemeanor committed by me. My last Gaoler gave me only security, and as I am Inform'd Rented the House of the Corporation. If the Corporation don't think fitt to let Mr. Johnson have the House that Armston Rented, don't you believe that another House must be found by the Corporation for the Custody of the Prisoners, and an Apartment be allowed for the Jailer. I did not in the least expect this opposition, but

hope it will not be taken ill that I Assert the Right of my Lord Huntingdon, from whom I had my Authority and my own right in this respect.

"I am,

"Honr'd Sir,

"Your most obedient humble Servant,

"LEO. PIDDOCKE.

"Edmund Ludlam, Esq., Mayor of Leicester."

This brought out a reply from Mr. Mayor, who said :

"Sir,—I received yours by Mr. Johnson. There are some reasons for our opposition to him, which I don't care now to mention, but I assure you this Corporation have more regard to their Obligations to that Noble Lord than to offer anything which should have the least colour of opposition to his Lordship's Indisputable right, or cast any Disrespect upon Mr. Piddocke, who has always deserved so well of us.

"I was in hopes I should have had the pleasure of seeing you on Monday, being told you intended to be at the meeting of the Gentlemen,<sup>y</sup> and at the same time was told that when Johnson and Coulson was with you, that you Declin'd appointing a Gaoler and wou'd leave it to the Corporation. I wish I had any other Intimation, and should have been glad of a line from you. I am afraid the Management of this Affair has been misrepresented to you.

"I am fully convinc'd of your right to the Bayliff of the Borough and Keeper of the Gaol, and there is no Doubt but you ought on all accounts to have the approbation of the Gaoler, but by the strictest search I can make, I find he as well as the Sergeants have for a very long time been by the Choice of the Mayor and Aldermen. The reason may be that the Gaoler's place not being worth accepting without the Bridewell, That on that account the Bridewell Keeper has always been appointed Gaoler by the Bayliff. I do not mention this as any obligation upon you, but to inform you of what has been usuall. I believe this is the first Instance of a Dispute of this kind, which I am very sorry should happen in my time. However, as the Corporation have made choice of the Bearer, Mr. Norris, as Keeper of the Bridewell, whom I doubt not you'll find every way qualified to serve you as Gaoler, I shall take it as a particular favour if you will appoint him, and oblige

"Yours,

"EDMD. LUDLAM.

"P.S. Whoever is Gaoler, I think it will be necessary for his security, to advise him to what Armston design'd, and that is to apply to Court for a Rule, that the Bayliff may give a Warrant to the Gaoler to Detain the Prisoner upon the return of the *capias* as is done by the Sheriffs of the County, but I should not dictate to you in affairs of this kind. I mentioned

<sup>y</sup> A meeting held in anticipation of a County Election.

this last year to Mr. Recorder, who seem'd to approve of it and I should be glad of your thoughts.

"Yours,

"EDMUND LUDLAM.

"To Mr. Leonard Piddocke, Attorney,  
At Ashby-de-la-Zouch."

To this Mr. Piddocke forwarded a rejoinder as follows :

"Mr. Mayor,

"When Mr. Johnson and Mr. Coulson came to me I told them I would wait on Mr. Mayor and the Corporation on Monday and would then come to a conclusion, but did not say anything to my Remembrance that tended the least to consent that the Corporation should elect, apprehending it my Indisputable right to nominate a Jailer. An unexpected Affair required my being at Derby on Monday, and having received a Letter from Mr. Herrick that several Persons had applyed to him for a Recommendation, and he intimating that he had no objection to Mr. Johnson's son, I wrote him word that I had likewise no objection to him, or to that Effect. Upon Mr. Johnson and his son's coming over to me it was represented to me that before Monday the Corporation had proceeded to the Election of a Jailer, which I apprehend was in opposition to my right of nomination, And therefore promised Mr. Johnson's son upon giving such security as Mr. Herrick approved of he should have the place. If I was too hasty in my proceeding, I shall take care in the future to avoid anything that may give displeasure to the Corporation, but as I have promis'd, I don't know I can be fairly disengaged. Had I known that you Mr. Mayor had any objection to him, I wou'd have absolutely refused him, being determined not to do any Act that may give Displeasure to any Member of the Body. If he commit any Misdemeanour, and it's represented to me, He shall not only be putt out, But I will Advise with the Corporation what Person is proper to Succeed him. I am, Honoured Sir, with due respect,

"Your most obedient

"Humble Servant,

"LEO. PIDDOCKE.

"To Edmund Ludlam, Esq.,

"Mayor of Leicester."

In their difficulty the Corporation consulted the Recorder (W. Wrighte, Esq.). It seemed that Johnson had obtained possession of the Bridewell House, and held it in defiance of them. The Recorder advised them to bring an action of ejectment against him; first fitting up a proper place for the safe keeping of the prisoners, and giving the bailiff (Mr. Piddocke) and Johnson notice of such a place having been provided. The termination of the affair was, however, that Norris (the nominee of the Corporation) remained the Bridewell-keeper;

the reason being probably this—as the Bridewell-keeper was the salaried servant of the Corporation, and the Gaoler's place was not worth having of itself, the Bailiff was glad to accept the Bridewell-keeper as Gaoler, as involving an arrangement less expensive to himself than the appointment of a second person as Gaoler.

Among the out-door amusements of the inhabitants, bowling was probably the most popular in the early part of the last century. It was provided for at the public expense. In the year 1733 the Bowling Green House was erected in what was called the Horse Fair—the scene of military parades in former times, when the town wall was still standing on the south side of the town, and situate just outside that wall. In the House, the Recorder of Leicester subsequently lived, and it was then a suburban residence. In the year 1736-7, Mr. Newton and Mr. Howkins were allowed £100 out of the town funds to finish the Bowling Green, and in 1740 the same persons had permission to remove the Green in the Horse Fair from the ground belonging to a Mrs. Worthe, and to add to it as much as was necessary from the Corporation property; as the Chamberlains' accounts bear witness. In modern Leicester, the site of the recreation of old Leicester is still indicated by the names of two streets—Horse-fair Street and Bowling-green Street.

At this time, Bradgate House continued to be inhabited by the Grey family. Here, on the death of the third Earl of Stamford, in the year 1739, when he was succeeded by Harry, his son, the fourth Earl—the grandfather of the present Earl's grandfather—a visit of congratulation and respect was paid by the civic functionaries. The visit is incidentally mentioned in the Chamberlains' accounts:—

	£.	s.	d.
Paid Mrs. Fopotts for Biscuits, visiting Lord Stamford on ye			
Succession of his Honour - - - - -	-	0	4 4
Paid to the Servants at visiting the Earl of Stamford - - -	-	0	10 0

A reprobate named Condit, the son of an old chimney sweeper, died in Leicester about this time. One of his malpractices was to disinter the dead in the churchyards, in order to supply the surgeons with subjects for dissection. One night he was engaged in an affair of this kind with a companion, who was a novice, to whom he had promised a considerable reward. They had taken a newly buried corpse out of the grave, and put it into a bag, when Condit (wishing to get his timid accomplice's services for nothing, and thinking to do so by stratagem), as he placed the bag on the man's shoulder, slyly gave him a violent pinch by the ear. The man at once concluding that it was the spirit of the corpse that had done so, threw down the

bag, and ran away terrified. Condit took home his burden, and laid it between the mattress and the bed, to lie there until the surgeon came in the morning. His wife complained of a large lump being in the bed, but Condit said it was a bag of stolen potatoes; with which explanation she was perfectly satisfied. When the surgeon had examined the body, he found it in a state unfit for his purposes; and therefore the resurrectionist had to get rid of it as well as he could, resolving it should be passed on to some other person. Being a fellow of a reckless and cunning character, he was not at a loss for an expedient. Next night, seeing a woolpack lying in the Gallow-tree Gate, about to be despatched to Yorkshire, he cut it open, took out some of the wool, thrust the corpse in its place, and sewed up the pack again; there leaving it. The pack was forwarded to its destination, and thus he evaded detection.<sup>2</sup>

This year (1742) the Races were held in St. Mary's Field for the first time, having hitherto been held in the Abbey Meadow, where the horses sometimes ran up to the knees in water. On one of the Race Days (August 18), about eight o'clock in the evening, a violent hail and rain storm occurred, accompanied by thunder and lightning, which lasted two hours. Pieces of congealed rain and hailstones, two inches in circumference, fell in large quantities, killing hundreds of birds, found in the gardens next morning. The inundation of the streets was so extensive, that the first floors of most of the houses were filled with water, which the inhabitants laded out in pails, and the water stood six feet deep in many cellars. Waggon-loads of ice were to be seen lying about on the Saturday morning following.

The year 1743 was not fertile in local events. A quarrel arose in the summer between the occupier of the Abbey Meadow and the freemen, which shows how encroachment has been attempted and resisted at all periods. The matter was brought before a Common Hall in August, at which this resolution was adopted: "Ordered, that if Mr. John Nedham or Francis Nedham, or any person whatsoever, do refuse to let the Freeman's horses or mares go into the Abbey Meadow (as has been used time out of mind), paying first, or tendering to the said John Nedham, or Francis Nedham, or such other person or persons concerned, fourpence for each horse or mare, to be tacked as usual—then such Freeman do turn in their horses and mares into the said Abbey Meadow untacked. And if the said John Nedham or Francis Nedham, or any person employed, do impound any horse or mare, horses or mares, belonging to any Freeman or Freeman, that such Freeman or Freeman do immediately after

<sup>2</sup> Throsby's *History of the Borough*.

such impounding replevin their said horses or mares ; the charge of which to be paid out of the town stock."

It was found that the alteration of the site to carry on the Races, from the Abbey Meadow to St. Mary's Field, was either attended, or alleged to be attended, with injury to the tenants of the land ; and therefore, at a Common Hall held on September 28, it was ordered "that the farmers for the time being of the South Fields belonging to the Borough of Leicester shall have six pounds six shillings, yearly, during each such year as there shall be a Race in the said Fields, for the damage that they shall sustain thereby ; and that the present farmers of the said fields shall have six pounds and six shillings, for the damage by them sustained by the last Race there."

The reader has already learnt that the Corporation represented the community, or assumed to do, on all political questions, at the time to which these chapters relate. In February 1745 they moved in a matter doubly interesting to them, because the price of port wine and the woollen manufacture were involved. As one of their members (Mr. Wigley) was then living at Scraptoft, they appointed a deputation to wait upon him, in order to take counsel with him upon the subject. The minute in the Hall Book thus records the circumstance : "Read a letter from Arthur Atherley, Esq., Mayor of Southampton, purporting that there has been a Proposal to lay an Additional Duty of four Pounds a Tun on all Portugal Wines ; and Whereas the Trade to Portugal is almost the only one of which the Ballance is in our favour, and should an Additional Duty be laid on the Produce of that Country, and the King of Portugal should lay a Duty on Woollen Manufacture, it will prove very Detrimental to this Country, and especially to this Town ; It is therefore Ordered that Mr. Mayor, Mr. Edmund Ludlam, Mr. William Brushfield, Mr. Thomas Bass, Mr. John Smalley, and Mr. Robert Hall, do go to Scraptoft, to consult with Mr. Wigley about the same to-morrow."

The accession of George I. to the throne of England having united to the crowns of England and Scotland that of the Electorate of Hanover, the new inns established over the country adopted as a sign the "Three Crowns," in honour of the Hanoverian dynasty. In Leicester this example was followed, and some time about the year 1726—or probably at the commencement of George the First's reign—the "Three Crowns" in this town became a great place of resort, more particularly with Whigs and Hanoverians ; but it was not until the year 1745 that the great Corporation banquet, the Venison Feast, was held at the house. There must have been a portion of the Corporation, at least, favourable to the royal family, or this conclusion would not have been arrived at : "Ordered, that the Venison

Feast be at the Three Crowns, on Monday, the Nineteenth day of August next, and that a Hogshead of Ale, or more, if Mr. Mayor shall think fit, be drank at the charge of the Corporation."

A kind of Fire Brigade was this year instituted by the local authorities. The frequent occurrence of conflagrations in neighbouring villages and towns, had suggested the necessity of procuring engines of superior construction, the year before; and it was probably found that a larger staff of men to work them was also needed. In August, therefore, at a Common Hall, it was resolved, "that Twenty Men be employed four times in the year, or oftener, if occasion requires, to play the engines, to keep them in order, to be allowed for the same twelvepence a piece for their trouble." In this arrangement, we have the first recognition in Leicester of systematic precaution, on an extensive scale, against the occurrence of the calamity here mentioned.—The Town Chamberlains paid £20 to the "poor sufferers by fire at Narborough" only a month or so after these firemen were appointed.

Early in August, a noted race was run on the Leicester Course, in the South Fields, between a horse named "Rib," and another named "Bucephalus." "Rib" won at three heats with much difficulty; the spectators remarking that as they started each heat, so they came in—so severe was the struggle. As the horses crossed turnpike-roads four times, and these were left in a foul state by the farmers' carts, in wet seasons, the horses ran up to the middle in mire in some places.

Events occurred this year which shook the entire fabric of society—the rebellion of the Scotch against the reigning family having nowhere excited more powerfully the public mind than in this district. Its progress and development will be traced in the following chapter.

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## CHAPTER V.

THE JACOBITES AND THE ELECTION OF 1738—THE TREASONABLE PAPERS  
 ATTRIBUTED TO THE WHIGS—PRINTED CONTROVERSY ON THE SUBJECT  
 —CORPORATION ADDRESS TO THE KING—PROCLAMATION OF WAR WITH  
 FRANCE—INVASION OF ENGLAND BY THE YOUNG PRETENDER—PRE-  
 PARATIONS OF THE LOYAL PARTY—THE DRILLING OF THE WHIGS AND  
 DISSENTERS IN LEICESTER—THE PRETENDER AT DERBY—THE EX-  
 CITEMENT AND TERROR IN LEICESTER—THE RETREAT OF THE REBELS  
 —THEIR DEFEAT AT CULLODEN—LOYAL ADDRESSES OF THE JACOBITE  
 CORPORATION—THE OUTBURST OF THE DISAFFECTED AT THE ELECTION  
 IN 1754—GRADUAL DISAPPEARANCE OF JACOBITISM.

It has already been related, in previous chapters, how incessant were the efforts of the Jacobites to restore the Stuart family, after the abdication of James II., to their ancient position in this country. The signing of the Association at a Common Hall in 1696; the constant intrigues of the Jacobites of the Corporation in promoting their views; the symptoms of popular favour shown to the Pretender, apparent from time to time; the discovery of papers compromising local Jacobites; and the quartering of dragoons in the town for the purpose of keeping in check the disloyal adherents to the exiled family,—have, in succession, been briefly mentioned. During two generations these proceedings kept the inhabitants in a state of turmoil, dividing them into two parties, bitterly opposed to each other and ready to appeal to the arbitrement of the sword—as their ancestors had done a century before in the war between king and parliament—had occasion again afforded the opportunity.

The presence of Colonel Churchill's regiment of dragoons in Leicester in 1723 only served to keep under the embers of disaffection: the treasonable spirit of the Jacobites still smouldered, and, whenever it could, burst out into flames. On the occasion of a contested election, fifteen years after, it burst forth into fury. The candidates were George Wright, Esq., and James Wigley, Esq., of Scraptoft, who had all the support of the Tory and Jacobite Corporation, and Walter Ruding, Esq., of Westcotes, who represented the



politics of the Whig or Hanoverian party. Men, women, and children took an active part in the contention. Invectives and accusations of the coarsest description were published by members of one party concerning the other; and bills were posted on the walls of a grossly treasonable nature, attributed by the Whigs to the Corporation party—the latter throwing back the charge on their opponents. Both sides professed an anxiety to discover the authors of the papers. Among the Whigs the principal person was Mr. Norton, a solicitor, of high character, and he and his political friends sent an early account of the treasonable papers to the Government. Messrs. Wright and Wigley were elected; but a petition was forwarded to parliament disputing the return of the latter, which added to the excitement. After the election, the Corporation having the local power in their own hands, insisted on Mr. Norton and his associates being taken before the Magistrates—Messrs. William Lee (the Mayor), Gabriel Newton, Richard Goodall, and Samuel Simpson. When under examination, to the astonishment of the bystanders, Mr. Norton suddenly became speechless, and died without a groan—the excitement created by the unfounded allegation, and by being placed in an ignominious position, having unquestionably caused the catastrophe. It happened on the first of February.

At a Common Hall held in March, it was Ordered “That the Chamberlains do pay Mr. Mayor, and such persons as he employed, or shall employ, in going to London, or otherwise, the charges relating to the treasonable papers lately stuck up in several places in the town, and likewise the sum of £100 offered as a reward to any person or persons who should discover the author or authors thereof; so as such person be convicted of being the author of such papers.”

The Corporation did not scruple to assert that these very papers, “highly reflecting upon his Majesty’s person and government,” were “stuck up by *the Whiggs*,” and they incurred heavy expenses in defending their alleged “innocence” against the “malicious aspersions therein charged.”<sup>a</sup> It was of course *very probable* the “Whiggs” would reflect upon the “person and government” of a king whose family they had exerted themselves to place on the throne, and *equally probable* that the Jacobite Corporation who, in their secret

<sup>a</sup> In the Chamberlains’ Accounts occurs the following entry relating to this matter:

	£.	s.	d.
Paid the Expenses on the account of the several treasonable papers stuck up in several parts of the town by the Whiggs, on the 1st day of February 1737 (1738, new style), highly reflecting upon his Majesty’s person and government, and the government of this Corporation, and defending our innocence against the malicious aspersions therein charged	-	-	42 11 7

orgies drank the health of the Pretender, were quite innocent of publishing, or conniving at the publication, of placards in vilification of the monarch whose dynasty they in their hearts despised and detested.

In April a paper, headed "Remarks relating to the Treasonable Papers lately published in Leicester," was circulated in the town, in which reflections were freely indulged in upon the friends of the Government, who, it was insinuated, were the authors of the papers. They alleged that the Petition against Mr. Wigley's return was to have been presented by Mr. Ruding, on the very day on which the handbills were posted up, and they submitted that that was done with a view to the intended Petition, and that thus the Whigs had an end to be served in the proceeding. The anonymous *Remarkers* said that another member of the Whig "faction" had been charged with having one of the treasonable papers at ten o'clock on the same night on which they were published; while another person had informed them he found one of the papers put into his window.

To these allegations the Whigs answered fully in the pages of a London magazine; there being then no local paper in which they could defend themselves from the attacks of the Jacobites. With regard to the papers, they said, "Supposing, against *common Sense*, as well as *Truth*, the *Whigs* to have been the Authors of these Papers, and to have presented their Petition the same Day they were posted up; what End could this have served? Would it have destroyed Mr. *Wigley's* pretended formidable Majority, or have alter'd the Equity of his Cause? Or, have they so mean an Opinion of the Justice of the *House of Commons*, as to suppose they would determine against a legal Majority, purely because some villainous Bigots, of the *Jacobite* Party, had threaten'd them, and the Government itself? Whenever this dark Affair shall come to light, it cannot reasonably be doubted but it will be found to have been transacted amongst those, not the meanest Persons neither, whose Principles naturally lead such of them as are possess'd with a blind and desperate Zeal for the worst Cause, to do such Things, even when no End but the Venting of impotent Rage and Malice can be served by so doing."

The *Remarkers* also blamed the Hanoverians for their zeal in sending up the treasonable papers to the Government, instead of trusting them with the Magistrates. On this the Whigs thus commented, reminding their opponents of their disloyalty in drinking the health of the Pretender on his birthday (June 10) every year:—"It were much better, in some Circumstances, not to be inquisitive or ask Questions. What if the Friends of the Government had not that

Opinion of the Equity and Ingenuity of the Magistrates, and of their Zeal to serve the Government in this Affair, that these *Remarkers* have? What if they took Copies to prevent the Contents of the Originals from being *secreted*, if they should all have been seiz'd? Or, perhaps they remember'd a well-known treasonable Action, annually committed in the Borough on *June 10*, some Years ago; and which was known to almost every Body but the then Magistrates, who pretended, at least, to be ignorant of it, and made no Enquiry about it till it was first begun by the Friends of the Government. They thought it therefore most proper to send the Papers, which came to their Hands, to the Rev. Mr. *Jackson*, who was then in *London*, and who immediately took Care to have them laid before a Secretary of State; and who also (we are well assured) did the Magistrates so much Justice, unasked, as to acquaint a great Man, when the Papers were laid before him, that the *Mayor* had proclaim'd £100 Reward for discovering the Author, &c., of the Papers. Yet these ignorant Defamers, very indecently abuse him, without the least Pretence. But Mr. *Jackson* is above their Abuse, and despiseth them, and forgives the Authors of them; and we believe he would have been glad to have been inform'd, that the Magistrates had been as diligent on their Part, as these Friends of the Government were, to detect the Authors of the Papers, by calling before them such reputed *Jacobites* as they knew were in the Borough; and, at least, to have clear'd their own Body from any just Suspicion, by closely examining those of them, they were inform'd (and these *Remarkers* own) had drank the *Pretender's* Health under the Name of K. *James III.* on *June 10*, 1736. And if they appear'd not to be concern'd in these Papers; they ought to have shown their Discouragement of that former Disaffection. Would not Magistrates, really zealous for the Government, endeavour to expel out of the Corporation such disloyal Members, who are a Scandal to it? And must not the admitting and retaining such Men in their Body tend to the *total Subversion* of the Corporation, and Peace of the Borough?"

In refuting the statement concerning Mr. Norton, the Whigs said:—"This Point requires better Evidence than that of these *Remarkers*. To prove this, in Answer, we desire to know, whether any of these *Remarkers* dined with Mr. Norton the Day they speak of? If they did, they must know that he did not dine upon *Scotch Collops*, and that in saying he did, they have averred a Falsity; if they did not, how came they to know that he *dined heartily*, or thus to cook up a Dish for him out of their own Invention? And what is this, if it was true, to the Purpose? Has no Man ever died suddenly after having eat an hearty Dinner the Day before,

or even the Day he died? But these charitable and good-natured Remarkers would have the Publick believe that he died in Confusion from the Consciousness of Guilt, and that there is Evidence of it. As to his pretended *Confusion*, we have only the bare Word of his Enemies; had any of his Friends been present at his Examination, we should have been better satisfied both about his Behaviour, and that of the Magistrates towards him. He was a Gentleman of remarkable Modesty and Bashfulness for his Profession, though of real Courage: And we suppose, they call his Behaviour a being in *Confusion*, because he had none of the Assurance and Effrontery of these Remarkers. But, as to any pretended Suspicion of Guilt, these Remarkers are inexcusably malicious in suggesting it, because they must know that his Innocency has been cleared as fully as possible, by many Affidavits of Persons of good Credit made before two of His Majesty's Justices of Peace for the County: By which it appears on one Hand, that Mr. Norton was at home, in Bed and asleep, at the very time the Deponent (they mention) swore that he saw him in the Market-Place, as he was returning to *Leicester* from *Kibworth*, which is 7 Miles distant from *Leicester*; And it appears also on the other Hand, that the Deponent had not been at *Kibworth* at all; and was at home and in Bed about eleven a-Clock of that Night, he swore he was at *Kibworth* at ten, and in his Return (on Foot) saw Mr. Norton about twelve, with some Papers, &c. Can any reasonable Man now doubt, but that the Person, on whose Evidence only these Remarkers have any Pretence to lay a Suspicion of Guilt upon Mr. Norton, is really perjured? And some of those who have charged Mr. Norton, and especially the Mayor, owned before, that they believed the Man was perjured, and that Mr Norton was innocent."

The charge of one of the Whigs having a treasonable paper in his possession, on the same night as that on which they were issued, was thus met by the party:—"We suppose the Person meant is the Servant of Mr. Grew, mentioned in the Magistrates' Account, where it is said, *Mr. Grew was charged with saying his Man had one of the Papers at ten o'Clock the Night before they were found posted up.* The Person who swore this appears, by Mr. Grew's own Affidavit, to have sworn falsely; for Mr. Grew (these Remarkers cannot but know) made Affidavit upon Oath, that it was about ten o'Clock in the Morning, after the Papers were posted up, that his Servant brought one of them to him: And therefore it is plain that the other Person, mistaking ten in the Morning for ten at Night, swore falsely; for which he ought to be heartily sorry. But Mr. Grew's Servant, as well as himself, is clear of any Suspicion."

The fact of a person finding one of these papers put into his

window, "which was not so much as pretended to have been posted up as the rest were," was thus explained: "These Remarkers have either had very bad information, or they are very fond of telling Lyes: For the Gentleman (meaning Mr. *Garle*) under whose Window one of these papers were put, did not find it, but had it brought to him by a Servant who found it. They would insinuate that he put it there himself, and so readily found it. Whether this Paper had been posted up or not, is not certain; but it plainly appeared it was intended to have been posted up, for the Back of it was pasted all over: And the thrusting it up his Window, instead of posting it up, was done, no doubt, with a villainous Design to make him suspected. And we cannot but observe, that tho' the Remarkers talk so much of the Diligence of the Magistrates in examining Things to the Bottom, they took not the Pains to send for or examine Mr. *Garle's* servant; who, they were told, found one of the Papers, and delivered it to his Master: Which had they done, who knows what discoveries might have been made?"

Having thus disposed of the insinuations and charges of the *Remarkers*, the Whig writer thus retaliated upon the assailants of his party: "Do they not know, then, that one of their Party, called *Ludlam*, had long skulked in this Borough (where he thought himself safe from any Enquiry) for fear of being examined by the Justices of Peace of the County, before one of whom an Affidavit was made that he read a Paper, which he owned since to be one of the treasonable Papers; and after reading it to a Person unknown to the Deponent, said to him, *Now my Life lies in your Hand*, and damned the Person if he betrayed him? This Man, who had Notice given him to make his Escape, when the Friends of the Government had a Warrant out against him, was lately taken and examined in the Borough (by Consent of the Party, as is supposed) and then owned, that he had one of the treasonable Papers, and said he had it from an *Alderman*, who has not been thought fit to be examined about it. And when the *Justice*, before whom the Affidavit was made against him, asked him, whether the Night before the Papers were published, he was not in Company with some disguised Persons, who had *blackened their Faces*, that they might not be known? he also owned that he was; but was not permitted to give an Account of them, it being pretended he had been examined about that Matter before; and so the *Justice*, who wanted, and had a Right, to be informed about so suspicious a Circumstance, could have no Information. For the Truth of this Fact we appeal to the *Justice* himself, who is an hearty Friend of the Government. And we ask these Remarkers, who are, we doubt not, in the Secret, why these *disguised* Persons, and the Reasons of their

being disguised, are not made public? Why they are secreted? And why his Majesty's Justice of Peace for the County was not suffered to enquire into that suspicious Circumstance thoroughly? Many think, that if this Man was fully examined, and made to declare all he knows, a great Gap would be opened to discover the real Authors of the Treason."

The ill-feeling created in 1738 by the discovery of treasonable papers posted on the walls of the town was not allayed for some years after. In 1744 it was revived, and the Corporation evidently lay under the suspicion of the Government in relation to the affair; and were anxious (at least in appearance) to release themselves from it, by professing an anxiety to discover the authors of the papers. At their meeting (held February 22, in the mayoralty of Samuel Belton, Esq.) they came to the resolution here inserted: "Whereas Mr. Mayor did yesterday, by the Common Crier, offer a reward of one hundred pounds to any person that should give him information of the writing or publishing of a treasonable paper that was stuck on the window shutter of John Brown's house, near the North Gate, so as he or they should be convicted of the same; it was therefore ordered that if any such information be given, and any person or persons be convicted of the same, that the person or persons as shall be intitled to it, and also all charges of expenses that may happen in sending to the Secretary of State, or otherwise, or by reason or means of the said treasonable paper, the same to be allowed them in their accounts."

Nor did the authorities rest here; a message having been sent to both houses of Parliament, informing them that preparations were being made in France to land the Pretender, public bodies like that in Leicester were bound either promptly to repudiate the supposition of sympathy with his cause, or to lie under the imputation of disaffection to their sovereign. The Corporation of Leicester therefore adopted an address to the king, of which the following is a copy:<sup>b</sup>

"The Humble Address of the Mayor, Aldermen, and Common Council of the Borough of Leicester, in Common Council assembled.

"Most Gracious Sovereign;

"We, your Majesty's most Dutiful and Loyal subjects, the Mayor, Aldermen, and Common Council of the Ancient Borough of Leicester, in Common Council assembled, being informed that a Descent was Intended by the French upon these kingdoms, with design to set a Popish Pretender upon that Throne on which your Majesty has so long sat and defended all your subjects in the quiet enjoyment of their Religious and Civil Rights,

<sup>b</sup> The spelling is modernized.

beg leave to assure your Majesty of our abhorrence of such an attempt against your Sacred Person and Government.

"As Protestants and as Englishmen, we cannot but have a grateful sense of the many Blessings we enjoy under your Majesty, which we could not hope for under a Popish Prince, introduced by a Popish army; and whilst we retain any sense of our Religion and happy Constitution, we cannot think of Exchanging them for Idolatry and Superstition, for Tyranny and Arbitrary Power. These Considerations will, we doubt not, always give Loyalty and Unanimity to your Majesty's subjects, which must strangely damp any attempt that may be made upon our happy Constitution. We therefore beg leave to take this opportunity (when some persons unknown have dared to spread treasonable papers in our streets) of humbly and publicly assuring your Majesty of our strict and zealous Loyalty to your sacred Person and Government, and to our happy Constitution in Church and State; and that we will use our utmost Endeavours to discover and bring to Justice the Authors of the said Papers, and to render abortive any attempts that shall be made upon these Kingdoms, and to preserve the Protestant Succession in your Majesty's most Illustrious House, and to deliver down to Posterity our Religion and Liberties as we received them from our Ancestors.

"Given under our Common Seal this 23rd February, 1743 [1744, N.S]."

It was natural that the Government and people of this country should be roused to hostility against the French king on his rendering help to the Pretender; but France took the initiative, declaring war against England on the 20th March. On the last day of the month, George the Second declared war against France.

The event was duly notified in this town—the grim ceremonial of the proclamation being intermingled with the grotesque, by the presence of the Halbert Men in their ancient armour. The Corporation ordered "that if the High Sheriff of the County, or the Under Sheriff, or either of them do appear in person to proclaim his Majesty's declaration of war against France, that both Companies do attend him in their formalities for that purpose, and that the Halbert Men go armed in their helmets and breastplates." It was therefore recorded on the 7th of April that "this day John Ayre, Esq., High Sheriff of the County, attended by Mr. Mayor, Mr. Recorder, and both Companies in their formalities, Constables, and Halbert Men proceeded from the Town Hall to the High Cross, where his Majesty's declaration of War against France was openly read, and then proceeded to the Coal Hill and to the Cornwall; at both which places the declaration was read."

The country had been prepared by events for a repetition of the attempt to restore the Stuarts to the throne of England. As we have before seen, the French king assisted Charles Edward (the son

of the Chevalier) in a fresh enterprise to invade the country. Late in July, 1745, the young Pretender sailed from a French port in a vessel conveying a party of Scotch and Irish adventurers; and after encountering an English cruiser landed in the Hebrides. Early in August, a proclamation was issued offering a reward of £30,000 to any person seizing the Pretender, in case he might land in any part of his Majesty's dominions. On the last day of the month the king returned to this country from Hanover, where he had gone in the month of May preceding. On the 4th of September, the rebels took possession of Perth and there proclaimed the Pretender; and on the 16th of the same month he proclaimed his father king of Great Britain at the high cross, Edinburgh, and himself regent of his dominions. The battle of Preston-pans took place five days after; when Sir John Cope being defeated by the Highlanders, the rebels for the time became masters of Scotland, with the exception of a few fortresses. Preparations were now made all over England, by the loyal party, for the raising of soldiers to suppress the rebellion; the peers, the gentry, and even some of the Catholics, subscribing large sums to the fund instituted for this purpose.

In this town, the Corporation did not contribute any money to the fund; but at their meeting on the 27th of September, they resolved on making application to William Wrighte, Esq., or any other gentleman whom the Mayor might select, to draw up an address to send to his Majesty, "upon account of the Rebellion in Scotland;" and on the 2nd of October it was signed and sealed at a Common Hall meeting. It was as follows:

"To the King's most Excellent Majesty.

"Wee the Mayor, Recorder, Bayliffs, and Burgesses of the Borough of Leicester, in the County of Leicester, beg leave to Approach your Sacred Person, with hearts full of Joy for your Majesty's safe Arrival in Great Britain at a time when your Presence was Immediately necessary to secure to us our Lives, Libertys, and Religion.

"The free Enjoyment of those Blessings in every part of your Majesty's Reign over us has Inspired us with a Loyalty founded upon Reason as well as Duty, and therefore 'tis no wonder that with the utmost Abhorrence and Surprise we heard that any of your Majesty's Subjects should, contrary to their Real Interest and Duty, make any attempts to sett an Abjured Pretender upon your Throne, or endeavour to exchange Liberty for Slavery, Religion for Superstition.

"Wee beg leave humbly to assure your Majesty of our firm Attachment to your Person and Family, and that our Lives and Fortunes shall be spent in their Support, being resolved to endeavour to the utmost to transmit to our Successors and Posterity that Religion and Liberty which we have received from our Ancestors, and which we cannot hope to be continued



but in your Royal Person and Family. Wherefore we sincerely pray that your Majesty, or some Descendants from your Royal Person, may sit on the Throne of these Kingdoms to the latest Generations.

“THOMAS HERRICK,  
“Town Clerk.”

In the crisis at which the country had arrived, the voluntary exertions of the people were sufficient to add 60,000 men to the king's forces; the Spitalfields manufacturers alone furnishing 3,000; but none were levied by the Corporation of Leicester, although they had made very zealous professions of loyalty.

On the 15th of November the rebels entered Carlisle on their way southwards. On the 24th, at noon, they reached Lancaster. As there were now no daily newspapers, nor telegraphic wires, nor railroads, the people of this country could only obtain such casual information as rumour afforded, or as messengers brought, of the movements of the Pretender and his Highlanders. But the inhabitants of Leicester friendly to the Government, the Whigs and Dissenters, were not idle: the young men volunteered for service—some being drilled in the Castle-yard, and others in the burial-ground of the Great Meeting—then the principal Nonconformist place of worship. They do not appear, however, to have met with any encouragement from the Corporation, who were only anxious to ascertain the news; as their resolution, adopted at a Common Hall meeting on the 28th of November, indicates: “Ordered, that Mr. Mayor shall send out what Messengers he thinks proper, to wait for and send accounts of the motions of the Rebels at the charge of the Corporation.”

On the 28th the insurgents entered Manchester. Marshal Wade was now in pursuit of the Pretender from Newcastle, and the Duke of Cumberland had taken the command of the king's troops assembled in Staffordshire. He was at Lichfield on the day last named. On the 1st of December the young Pretender entered Macclesfield with his main army, and on the 4th he arrived at Derby with about 7,000 followers.

The excitement in Leicester had now attained its climax. Reports had reached the town of the fierceness and barbarity of the Highlanders; descriptions of whose strange costume, unintelligible language, and wild manners, astonished and alarmed the peaceable townsmen. Moreover, it was reported that they outraged the women, and killed infants, whom, it was said, some of them ate like cannibals. The historian Throsby (a person having strong Jacobite predilections) ridicules the conduct of the townsmen, who, he says, when Charles Edward was at a distance, appeared in arms at mock-fights in the Castle-yard, but who, when his army reached Derby, deserted the

parade, and "sneaked away" with the aged, the women, and the children, to seek asylums under the humble roofs of neighbouring villages. Of those who remained behind, some buried their valuable articles, money, and so forth, in the earth; while others, who wished well to the Pretender, either prepared food, meat baked and boiled, to set before his men on their arrival, or fervently prayed in secret for the success of the "old cause" and the army of the young Chevalier. The Mayor and a portion of the Corporation remained at home. Tradition relates that they were Jacobites, and that they had prepared an address breathing warm congratulation and zealous loyalty with which to welcome the Pretender, whose arrival they awaited in the old Guildhall.

About the sixth of December, he was expected in Leicester. Scouts entered the town with breathless haste, and reports spread from mouth to mouth, in exclamations—"They are at Loughborough!" "They are at Rothley!" "They are at Belgrave!" The place became empty. Shopkeepers unused to warfare, volunteers unorganized, and people terrified by the prospect of indiscriminate slaughter, fled in all directions.

In a day or two after, intelligence was brought of the retreat of the rebels from Derby; and then the address to the Pretender (known doubtless to the Mayor, and Mr. Herrick, the Town Clerk) was smuggled away, and the townspeople returned to their shops and houses, to be jeered at by the Jacobites who had remained behind in safety to welcome their fellow-rebels.

The rebels reached Manchester, on their return to Scotland, on the 9th of December, and entered Glasgow on the 25th. Early in the year 1746 General Hawley was suddenly attacked and disgracefully beaten by the Highlanders at Falkirk. On the 16th of April, however, they in return were entirely defeated at Culloden—an event followed by outrages and butcheries, committed by the order of the Duke of Cumberland, which the historian blushes to record—committed upon men, women, and children alike. Nor were they provoked by the poor rebels, whose conduct on their way southwards was free from reproach; for they maltreated no one, and they paid usually for what they required.

It must have been with ill-concealed chagrin and mortification that the Jacobites of the Corporation adopted the following Address on the 16th of May:

<sup>c</sup> It is said that some of the inhabitants of Loughborough, who sympathized with the Pretender's cause, despatched a messenger with a purse of gold for him, but finding that he had commenced his retreat to Scotland, the messenger retained the gold himself; threatening the contributors with exposure if they re-demanded it.

“To the King’s most Excellent Majesty.

“The Humble Address of the Mayor, Recorder, Aldermen, and Common Councill, of the Borough of Leicester.

“May it please your Majesty,

“Wee Your Majesty’s most Dutifull and Loyal Subjects, the Mayor, Recorder, Aldermen, and Common Councill of the Borough of Leicester, being truly sensible of the great Danger our Happy Constitution has been lately in from Popery and Foreign Arbitrary Power, beg leave to the utmost of our Abilities to express our Gratitude to your Majesty for your late Great and Signal Deliverance.

“Your Majesty’s Wisdom and Paternal Care for these Kingdoms was never more Conspicuous than in your sending your Son, his Royal Highness the Duke, to curb the Restless Spirits of your Majesty’s and the Nation’s Enemy, who has been the happy Instrument, under God and your Majesty, of restoring and securing to us our Laws, Trades, Libertys, and Religion, and we are at a loss to know, whether we ought most to admire his Royal Highness’s Profound Judgement, in the Disposition he made of your Majesty’s Forces at the late Battle of Culloden, or his Intrepid Courage and contempt of Death and Danger in the Course of that Glorious day.

“As the late Rebellion was the first Interruption any of your Majesty’s subjects ever received during your Auspicious Reign in the Enjoyment of their Civil Rights and Libertys, so by the late victory we look upon ourselves as fully restored to the Possession of those inestimable Blessings, and trust and are firmly satisfied that we shall Continue to enjoy them as long as your Majesty, or any of your Royal Family, shall sit upon the Throne of these Kingdoms, which we pray may be to the latest Generations. Given under our Common Seale this 16th day of May, 1746.

“THOMAS HERRICK,

“Town Clerke.”

The victory at Culloden was celebrated in Leicester by displays of fireworks and illuminations—especially by the lighting-up of the old Elizabethan High Cross with candles; these entries upon the Chamberlains’ accounts denoting the occurrence :

	£.	s.	d.
Paid William Ward for making of Fireworks on account of the			
Victory gained over the Rebels at the Battle of Culloden	-	3	13 6
Paid Valentine Kestings for illuminating the Cross with Candles			
upon account of the Victory at Culloden	-	-	0 0 6

After this event, the active manifestation of Jacobite feeling was less obvious; but the party did not become extinct, as we shall hereafter learn.

In May 1748 the king had left England for Hanover; and after the completion in October of the treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle, which

settled the terms of peace between Great Britain, Holland, and Austria, on the one side, and France and Spain on the other, he returned to England on the 23rd of November.

It was in relation to these events that the Corporation agreed to and sealed the following address at their meeting of the 23rd of December :

“ To the King’s Most Excellent Majesty.

“ May it please your Majesty,

“ Wee the Mayor, Recorder, Aldermen, and Burgesses of the Borough of Leicester, beg leave humbly to approach your sacred Person, to express the great Joy we received from your Majesty’s safe return to these Kingdoms, attended with the blessings of Peace.

“ Your Majesty entered into the late Warrs in defence of the Just rights of your subjects, and in Preservation of the Libertys of Europe ; and no sooner could your Majesty attain those great Ends, upon a solid and lasting Foundation, than you gave your Subjects the pleasing Prospect of Peace.

“ Wee give your Majesty our hearty thanks for your Paternal Care for the safety and Honour of these Kingdoms, and beg leave to assure you of our sincere affections and constant Loyalty, which we will upon all Occasions effectually demonstrate to the utmost of our Power.

“ Wee sincerely wish your Majesty may long Reign over an Obedient and Loyal People, and that your Posterity (with the same happy Notions of securing the Civil and Religious Rights of this Nation as your Majesty has always shown) may sit on the throne of these Kingdoms to the latest Generations. As this Wish comprehends all the Happiness that a Free and Protestant People can desire wee humbly assure your Majesty that it is our Constant and Ferrent Prayer. Given under our Common Seale this 23rd day of December in the year of our Lord, 1748.”

For five or six years the quarrel between Jacobite and Hanoverian was apparently lulled ; only to break out again, however, when special local events stirred it up again. In April 1754 one of these happened—a contest for the representation of the borough ; when Messrs. Wright and Wigley, the Corporation members, were opposed by Major Mitford, a Whig Candidate.

The election took place in a period of unusual local excitement, the Corporation and the freemen being arrayed in bitter antagonism to each other in consequence of the attempted enclosure of the South Fields ; yet the raking up of the embers of the old political strife between Jacobite and Hanoverian was, if possible, more productive of violent feeling than the freemen’s movement.

The memory of the “ Treasonable Papers ” was long preserved in the town, and therefore during a contested election, the Jacobite feeling was again manifested, and the old quarrel revived ; a paragraph having appeared in the *Evening Advertiser* which made public

the doings of the Pretender's partisans in Leicester. In the *Leicester Journal* of December 28, 1754, the following advertisement appeared on the subject :

“ Leicester, Dec. 16, 1754.

“ Whereas it has been falsely and maliciously represented, in a paragraph in the *Evening Advertiser* of the 7th instant, dated Leicester, Wednesday, Dec. 4, 1754, that on the Monday morning before, some of the mob there cried, *no Hanoverian King, Prince Charles for ever*: and that while he, who gave such account, was writing it, he heard the following lines sung with daring insolence :—

‘ As I was going to the Blue Bell,  
I saw Major Mitford going to hell;  
I up with my foot and kicked him in,  
And bid him make room for the Hanoverian king.’

And further added, with a sneer, ‘ That it was impossible but the magistrates themselves must, repeatedly, have heard those insolent and rebellious cries; and yet, such was their zeal for his majesty, that no notice was taken of it.’

“ We, whose names are under written, being the only Justices of the Peace for the said borough of Leicester, do severally declare, and are ready, upon our corporal oaths to swear, That neither on the said Monday morning, or at any other time before, or since, we, or any of us, ever heard such cry or song, as in the said paper is inserted, or any part thereof, or any other indecent expressions, either concerning his majesty, or his ministers, in any of the streets of the said borough or elsewhere: nor have we, or any of us, had information of any such rebellious cries, or songs, brought before us, or any of us: nor do we believe that any such words were either spoke or sung as aforesaid; but we do look upon the said paragraph to be hatched by some of the wicked heads that contrived and published the memorable treasonable papers in this town, in the year 1737.

“ William Lee, Mayor.

“ William Wright, Recorder.

“ Tho. Marten.

“ Samuel Simpson.

“ Richard Denshire.

“ Tho. Chapman.”

The *Evening Advertiser*, in commenting upon this advertisement, asks the magistrates to be a little more explicit: “ As, for example, is there any distinction betwixt swearing and taking a corporal oath? Is treason or sedition never *audible* but when Justice Lee, Justice Wright, Justice Marten, Justice Simpson, Justice Denshire, and Justice Chapman, are together? Otherwise, how can their worships offer, *each* of them, to make oath, that neither *they nor any other*, ever heard, &c. Who do they mean by ‘ his majesty ’:—the king of Spain, Annama-

boe, or any colour of the cards? What do their worships comprehend under the term 'indecent' in their political vocabulary? When these gentlemen in their great wisdom and *loyalty*, have HATCHED with their HEADS—(to use their own language), full and unequivocal explanations of the above difficulties, we shall do ourselves the honour to make our proper acknowledgments for the favour that will thereby be done the public, and the *loyalty* of the Borough of Leicester by our means."

In the *Journal* of Jan. 25, 1755, a number of persons severally depose to having heard on Monday, Dec. 2, 1754, various treasonable expressions uttered in Leicester. These were "D—— king George," "No Hanoverian king," "Prince Charles for ever!" "Wright and Wigley for Ever!" The deponents were Arthur Hazlerigge, Benjamin Sutton, Daniel Bankart, Richard Berridge, William Warburton, Samuel Bull, and James Hervey—doubtless all of the Whig party.

Handbills and placards appear to have been freely circulated in opposition to and defence of the Magistrates. One issued by the Jacobites retorts upon the Hanoverians that they are still "disposed to adhere to their stratagem of contriving and executing wicked devices and charging them upon their neighbours, agreeable to their notorious dark scheme in 1737."

In the *Journal* of February 1, 1755, James Froane, hosier, Elizabeth Bird, spinster, and James Burbidge, woolcomber, are stated to have deposed to hearing various treasonable expressions uttered, and the verse about Major Mitford sung, in the Market Place and the Highcross Street, on Wednesday, the 4th of December preceding. Eleanor, wife of Wm. Warburton, the landlord of the Horse and Trumpet, deposed to having heard some men and a woman drink "Damnation to King George and Mitford" in that house.

A copy of a warrant for the apprehension of John Hunt, charged with having cried out "Damn king George," and so on, dated December 6, 1754, and signed by one of the Justices, is contained in the *Journal* of February 1. This was published to prove that the Magistrates knew, *ten days before they wrote their advertisement professing not to have heard of the utterance of treasonable cries*, that such was the fact—that they had granted a warrant for the apprehension of a party charged with such an offence: consequently, that their advertisement contained a direct untruth.

In the same paper the Grand Jury, appointed at the Sessions in January, make a declaration counter to that of the witnesses whose names were mentioned in a preceding paper, and ask those persons why they did not make attempts to bring the offenders to justice. They also ask why efforts were not made to arrest the parties who

drank treasonable toasts at the *Horse and Trumpet*; and they insinuate that the landlord was agreeable to their proceeding. They add "And though they were in sailors' habits, were not their jackets and trousers of an *Orange* complexion?"

The quarrel only died out by degrees; so that it was not until George the Third ascended the throne that Jacobitism ceased to exist to any formidable extent in Leicester.

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## CHAPTER VI.

THE DAY OF THANKSGIVING—THE ERECTION OF THE EXCHANGE—RESUMPTION OF THE STRUGGLE BY THE NON-FREEMEN—THEIR SUCCESS AGAINST THE CORPORATION—PROPOSED LIGHTING AND WATCHING ACT—ERECTION OF THE ASSEMBLY ROOMS, EAST-GATES—AN EARTHQUAKE FELT IN LEICESTER—THE MAYOR'S DINNER—TURNPIKE IMPROVEMENTS—THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE "LEICESTER JOURNAL."

AFTER the stirring events and great excitement occasioned by the Jacobite insurrection of the year 1745, the town seems to have subsided for a few years into a tranquil condition, unless stirred up by an election contest. In the latter part of the year 1746, it was ordered that the ninth of October be kept as a day of Thanksgiving according to his Majesty's Proclamation, and that both Companies should attend Mr. Mayor to church in their gowns on the occasion. On that day, accordingly, the Aldermen and Councillors met at the Town Hall, at ten o'clock in the morning, and then heard a sermon at church; afterwards returning to the Hall, and proceeding thence to the Three Crowns, where an Ordinary was prepared for their refreshment.

The year 1747 passed over very quietly. There was, however, a rejoicing at the Gainsborough on the 25th of May, on account of the naval victories of Admirals Anson and Warren.

The building called the "Gainsborough" seems now to have become either inconvenient or inadequate to the requirements of the period. At the beginning of the year 1748, the Corporation ordered that the structure be taken down, and a new one erected, according to the plan produced by Mr. Mayor at a Common Hall. On the 21st

of March, the following resolution was arrived at by the body: "That Humphrey Whorstall's house, Coker's kitchen, the Guardhouse, and the Piazza, be all pulled down, and a new Gainsborough built, on or near as conveniently may be to the place where those buildings stand, according to the plan delivered in by Mr. Mayor at the last Hall; and that the shambles and shops in the Saturday Market be likewise pulled down, and a new shambles with a vault under them be made under the said Gainsborough, and that the expense of building the said Gainsborough and of pulling down the aforesaid buildings, be paid by the Chamberlains for the time being, and allowed them again in their accounts; and that Mr. John Westley shall buy in all the materials, direct all the workmen that shall be made use of about the said buildings, and see that they perform the same as they ought to do. And that for his care and trouble therein, he shall be allowed twelve pence in the pound for all money that shall be laid out, both for the erecting and pulling down the said buildings; except only for such joiners' and carpenters' work as he shall do and perform. And that the Chamberlains shall nominate the workmen, and direct where the materials for erecting the said buildings shall be bought."

The edifice was erected; but at what exact cost it is impossible to say, as the items are not defined in the Chamberlains' Accounts. Mr. John Westley, however, received £200; which, representing five per cent. on the total—the allowance above specified,—makes the outlay £4000. Instead of being called the new Gainsborough, the structure was known as the "Exchange." It stood for about a century, having been taken down in 1850; the Market House being built on a site a little to the westward of it.

In the winter of this year (1748) numerous cases of housebreaking took place, which led the Corporation to offer a reward of £20 to any person or persons who might apprehend any housebreaker or housebreakers so as they might be brought to conviction; and, in addition, it was ordered that the alderman of each ward should appoint such a nightly watch within his ward as he might think proper, to act until the first of March ensuing; the men to have not exceeding one shilling for each night's watching.

On April 19, 1749, at a Common Hall meeting, it was ordered, in accordance with his Majesty's proclamation, that the 25th be kept as a Day of Thanksgiving for the peace concluded with the continental powers. Both companies, attired in their municipal costume, attended at the Guildhall, before going to St. Martin's Church to hear a sermon preached, and afterwards dined and drank ale and wine together.

The endeavour of the non-freemen resident in Leicester, to obtain



the same privileges as the freemen, was this year renewed with final success. It has been recorded how John Stubbs, glover, resisted the Corporation in 1730, and with what result. His example encouraged others to persevere in opposition to the ancient usage, and the trial of strength was carried on for some years. In 1736 the Corporation raised the fee on admission to freedom from £20 to £30, and in the month of October took the initiative in the controversy, by committing to prison one Richard Glover, who refused to pay the penalty they levied on him for selling goods without first taking up his freedom. Glover then brought his action against the Corporation for false imprisonment, and Mr. Farmer, the Town Solicitor, was ordered to enter an appearance to defend the action. In March 1740 the Corporation ordered Henry Stubbs and other glovers to be prosecuted for refusing to take up their freedom—with what result does not transpire in the Hall Book.

Early in the following year, however, a suit was commenced, which had a long continuance and a determinate issue; the local authorities instructing the Town Solicitor forthwith to sue George Green *alias* Smith for following the trade of a watchmaker in this borough, not being a freeman of the Corporation. At the commencement of the year 1742, also, other persons were ordered to be sued on the same account, namely, Robert Phipps, Edward Jennings, Richard Cheney, and Daniel Wood; but their cases drop out of sight, and all the attention of the townsmen was absorbed in Green's case alone. The Corporation, in February 1743, offered to grant Green his freedom upon payment of £20 down and the charges of the action; but he refused the compromise. In July they proposed that he should pay £10 towards the law charges and £20 for his freedom, they being willing then to drop the action, but in case he should still stand out, resolving either to carry on the action or institute fresh proceedings—"it being prejudicial," they said, "to the Corporation, and an encouragement to others in the like case, who follow their trade not being freemen." Still he maintained his ground. In February, 1744, the Corporation made a third offer. They evidently felt two things—misgivings about their legal position and a conviction that their opponent was a man of firm resolution—so they grew more respectful and a shade more conciliatory: they ordered at a Common Hall meeting "that Mr. Green be admitted to his freedom upon payment of twenty pounds, provided that seven pounds, part of Mr. Herrick's bill of fourteen pounds for charges, be paid, and so as the Corporation be at no more charge than seven pounds." Mr. Green was still inexorable and undissolved, and so remained; as in the Hall Book under date March 21, 1748,

the following entry proves :—"Ordered that £40 be paid by the Chamberlains to Mr. Simons, the Solicitor of this Corporation, towards defraying the charges he had been at in carrying on the cause for them against George Green, otherwise Smith, which is to be tried at the next Assizes, to be held for the County of Leicester." The affair was now approaching a crisis, and therefore the municipal body determined to fortify itself by obtaining the opinions of Sir John Strange and Sir Dudley Ryder,<sup>a</sup> and by retaining the Recorder's services.

Unfortunately for the Corporation there was a little "hitch" in their case. It appears that the bye-law made in the eighth year of James the First [1610-1611] ordained that every person selling articles openly within the borough, non-freemen, *excepting on market and fair days*, should forfeit 40s. for every month wherein he should offend; while the bye-law made in 1681 enacted that if any person or persons, not being freemen, should *at any time* exercise their trades and callings, they should forfeit 40s. to the borough authorities, and this latter regulation was approved and allowed at the time by the Judges of Assize. The Corporation took the opinion of the two learned Counsellors upon the delicate question here involved—if they were to proceed upon the bye-law of 1610-1611 against Green, and he were to give them notice to produce at the trial the narrower bye-law of 1681 (which noticed no exceptions of days, thus showing a difference of customs existing at the two periods), would that evidence nonsuit them as plaintiffs? The custom declared upon could be fully proved beyond doubt, to be as laid in the declaration. Was it advisable, under the circumstances of the case, for the Corporation to try the action proposed for supporting the custom? Sir John Strange and Sir Dudley Ryder replied separately in the affirmative. At a Common Hall, held May 29, 1749, the following resolution was therefore agreed to :—"Ordered, upon reading the opinion of Sir Dudley Ryder and Sir John Strange, that the cause now depending in his Majesty's Court of Common Pleas, at Westminster, between the Mayor, Bailiffs, and Burgesses of this Borough, plaintiffs, and George Green otherwise Smith, defendant, be tried with as much expedition as it conveniently can; but according to the directions of the Mayor for the time being, and such of the Aldermen as he shall think proper to consult and advise with on that account."

The cause was heard, and (doubtless for the reasons suggested in the case submitted to counsel) was decided against the Corporation. In September they had the disagreeable duty of paying the costs to perform. These amounted to £18 0s. 10d. They were chafed greatly

<sup>a</sup> Throsby's *History of the Borough*, p. 152.

at the result; so much so as in December to threaten a renewal of action.<sup>e</sup>

In this way was brought to a conclusion a struggle which in various forms had been carried on for several generations. Its result was the total overthrow of the old system, and thenceforward any tradesman might settle in this borough without being subject to the heavy payment before levied by the Corporation. Publicans were still liable to the regulation, but none besides. It may, then, be considered only just to rank George Green, *alias* Smith, the watch-maker, among the champions of freedom of this locality.

One of the last acts of the Corporation in the year 1749 was to order a petition to be presented to the House of Commons for obtaining an Act of Parliament for "enlightening and cleansing the streets, and for keeping a regular and able watch, and for repairing and keeping in good order the public pumps and wells within this borough." Previous to this date even oil-lamps were unknown, and the public thoroughfares were therefore left in complete darkness in winter—the inhabitants having recourse to lanterns to guide them to their homes or to their neighbours' on the dark evenings. The Mayor and Mace-bearer went up to the House of Commons to attend while the measure was in progress, and a Mr. Sterrop was paid £27 11s. 4d. for drawing up the petition and bill; but the attempt was abortive, as an Act was not obtained.

Whatever may have been the reproach brought against the inhabitants in the earlier part of the eighteenth century, concerning their frequent orgies at the public expense and in private, it becomes obvious that in the middle of the century they had entered upon a career of improvement; as the last and other preceding paragraphs bear witness. As yet, however, they had no other public room in which to assemble when balls, dramatic entertainments, and any other kind of public performance took place, than the old Guild-hall. Here, it is said on the authority of old tradition, Shakespeare himself once acted on the stage; here, unquestionably, the company of players with which the illustrious dramatist was identified periodically performed;<sup>f</sup> and here, in succeeding generations, "strolling com-

<sup>e</sup> The Chamberlains' Accounts in unimpassioned figures thus record results:—

	£.	s.	d.
Paid Mr. Peck's bill, by order of Hall, on account of the Corporation being			
norsuited in the cause against George Smith, otherwise Green	-	-	18 7 6
Paid Wm. Wrighte, Esq., Recorder, for advice and for a retaining fee in			
Green's case	-	-	2 2 0
Paid him more for a retaining fee in the same cause	-	-	1 1 0

<sup>f</sup> For further information on this head see "Kelly's *Notices of Leicester*:" London; John Russell Smith, 1865.

panies," mountebanks, tight-rope dancers, and conjurors, exhibited their skill and accomplishments. From the reign of Elizabeth to that of George the Second, the old timbered hall was the only place of resort of the townspeople, when the visits of all classes of public performers attracted their curiosity and enkindled their interest. In the year 1750 an attempt was made to provide a more suitable building for the public accommodation and entertainment. Outside the ancient East Gate, then standing, with its low-browed portal (beneath which no waggon highly-laden could pass into the town), was an open space, where hay was brought for sale from time immemorial, and where coal carried on the backs of asses from the nearest collieries was sold to the dealers. This has long been known indifferently as the Hay Market or the Coal Hill; as, in earlier days, it was designated the Round Hill. Selecting this spot, Mr. John Bass erected upon it a pile of buildings; one end of which was a tradesman's shop, the other an Assembly Rooms, resting upon columns. In the latter, the companies of theatrical performers subsequently acted, and concerts and balls took place season after season. Upon a survey of the ground called the Round Hill, it appeared to a Common Hall held February 9, 1750, that Mr. Bass would lose about 160 feet on the south side, and would gain about 80 feet at the west end; the Corporation therefore agreed to give him leave to erect four or more columns upon the ground belonging to the Corporation, lying at the east end of his own ground, he paying to them for the same a yearly rent of one shilling.

On the last day of September 1750 a severe shock of an earthquake was felt in Leicester and its vicinity. It happened at midday, that is, about half-past twelve o'clock, and was perceived in Lincolnshire and Northamptonshire, as well as all over Leicestershire. The houses tottered; plates and glasses fell from the shelves; and slates, tiles, and some chimneys fell from the houses; but, happily, no greater mischief ensued. In some churches, where service was still going on (for the day was Sunday), the people fled from their devotions in the utmost consternation. The earthquake was attended with a rumbling report.

In the year 1751 very little occurred out of the ordinary routine of affairs. It may be mentioned, as an illustration of the late continuance of an ancient practice, that we find the Corporation still kept a stock of guns, bayonets, halberts, and armour, which were ordered to be cleaned by Tyringham Palmer.

It will have been noticed by the reader that the public dinners of the Corporation had hitherto been paid for out of the town purse. An alteration was made in this respect this year. Probably the

increase of the Mayor's salary in 1736, from £60 to £100 yearly, had prepared the way for the change. At a Common Hall the Corporation ordered that "at the election of every succeeding Mayor, the Mayor for the time being shall order a Dinner to be got at the Town Hall for the entertainment of the company there on that day, and that such Dinner shall not exceed the sum of five pounds, and that such Dinner shall be paid for by such succeeding Mayor elect, and that no presents shall be received on that occasion."

In order to give the reader an idea of the means of communication existing little more than a century ago between town and town, we may state that in 1725 the stage-coach journey from London to Exeter occupied four summer days. The passengers were aroused every morning at two o'clock, left their inn at three, dined at ten o'clock, and finished their day's labour at three in the afternoon. In 1739 Mr. Andrew Thompson, of Glasgow, with a friend, left that city to ride to London. There was no turnpike-road till they came to Grantham, within a hundred and ten miles of the metropolis. Up to that point they travelled on a narrow causeway, with an unmade soft road on each side. As strings of pack-horses met them, from time to time, they were obliged to plunge into the side road, and had often difficulty in scrambling again upon the causeway. The coach of a century ago carried no passengers on the roof; but it had a large basket—literally a basket—swung behind, for half-price passengers. The coachman had four horses in hand, and a postillion rode a pair of leaders. A journey of forty-seven miles in one day was a feat; and well might the vehicle which accomplished it be dignified by the name of "Machine."<sup>g</sup>

The period was one of turnpike improvement. In January 1752, the Corporation petitioned the House of Commons in favour of an Act of Parliament to make a turnpike road from Leicester to Ashby-de-la-Zouch, and they advanced the money out of the town stock for the purpose, and for obtaining the Act, and the other charges relating thereto; the money to be repaid by the Road Commissioners. In December 1753, they petitioned Parliament for a similar Act to make a road from Hinckley to Leicester, thence to Uppingham, and thence to Stamford, and for the insertion of a clause for amending the Leicester and Ashby turnpike act, at the joint expense of the Corporation and of the Gentlemen and Inhabitants of Rutland; if the latter would consent to the proposal. A grant of £63 was made in January 1754, towards the charge of obtaining an Act for the repairing of the road from this town through Uppingham to Wansford, in the county of Northampton. Again, in February 1754, it was ordered that £100

<sup>g</sup> Knight's "*Land we Live in*," vol. i.

be paid to Mr. Thos. Halford, solicitor for the Corporation, towards the charges of obtaining an Act of Parliament for making a turnpike road from this borough to the town of Narborough, in this county, and from this borough to the city of Coventry and other places. And also, towards obtaining a clause to be added thereto, for amending the Act passed in the previous Session of Parliament for making the Ashby turnpike road. The sum required was to be paid by the Chamberlains out of the town stock, and repaid out of the first money raised under the operation of the Act.

It must have already occurred to the reader that the place was rapidly emerging from the dulness and slowness of the small market-town to a state more important and improving. Its population had doubled in fifty years, having been at the commencement of the century only about 4,500, and being now estimated at more than 9,000. It had established a kind of fire brigade, erected a new exchange and new assembly rooms, attempted to procure a lighting and watching act, and was promoting the formation of turnpike roads: it next encouraged Mr. John Gregory to commence a weekly newspaper. On May 12, 1753, he accordingly issued No. I. of the *Leicester Journal*, containing just four advertisements, and price only twopence. The proprietor addressed this spirited poem, by way of introduction, to the public:

"In favour to the nation,  
(And doubtless with your approbation.)  
To rescue truth from party lies,  
To make you all alert and wise,  
We now appear; take it for granted  
'Twill prove the thing the world's long wanted,  
And favour neither Whig nor Tory,  
But fairly lay the case before ye;  
Like others we'll not stuff our papers,  
With self-hatched news or lying vapours,  
Nor forge ourselves an idle rumour—  
When we want truth, we'll give you humour.  
So politicks shall please the Cits,  
And poetry the brisker Witts.  
I therefore, Sirs, most humbly pray ye,  
Whether ye're Laity or Clergy,  
Of every calling, every station,  
Who would have the Denomination  
Of worthy Britons; now turn all  
From Lies; and take the *Le'ster Journal*."

The paper consisted of four small pages, filled with news taken from the London journals and very meagre paragraphs concerning local affairs, and presenting nothing in the shape of a leading article; it was an average sample of the early provincial newspaper. It helped,

however, to bring to light some of the smaller incidents happening in the town and neighbourhood, which would be considered beneath what is called the "dignity of history." Thus it informs us, under date June 23, that "a covered single horse-chaise sets out for London, on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday, from James Woods over against the Free School, Leicester." Again, on August 18 we are told of the removal of Mr. Gregory, the proprietor, from the Beast Market to "the shop late Mr. Chambers's on the Cornwall, Leicester;" on September 29 of the decease of Mr. Lewin, "an eminent hosier;" on October 6 of the decease of Mrs. Ann Beaumont of Stoughton Grange; and on November 2 of the performance of "Mr. Herbert's company of comedians" at the new play-house, that is, at the Assembly Rooms, East Gates, erected three years before. In the year 1754 it records other smaller local occurrences, which may be noticed in passing. On February 9, the decease of Mrs. Arabella Beaumont at Stoughton Grange is mentioned; with the additional remark that the estate descends to her niece, the lady of Anthony Keck, Esq., of Twickenham. The same paper announces that a main of cocks is to be fought at the Crane Inn, near Leicester. On March 23, Mr. Cartwright, "an eminent framesmith," is numbered among the dead. In April we approach all the turmoil of a contested election referred to in a previous chapter.

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## CHAPTER VII.

### NARRATIVE OF THE FREEMEN'S RESISTANCE TO THE ENCLOSURE OF THE SOUTH FIELDS BETWEEN 1752 AND 1757.

It has been shown rather fully, in an earlier chapter, how the Corporation treated the interests of the freemen in relation to the South Fields estate, and it has been recorded how, in the year 1708, by a large majority, they resolved on its enclosure. In the years following, the property and its management occasioned frequent trouble to the municipal body, with great discontent to the bulk of the freemen. It is difficult to form a clear opinion, from the absence

of evidence, of the detail of the proceedings; as the minutes of the Common Hall meetings are fragmentary and incomplete. Whether the resolution of 1708 was ever carried out seems uncertain, for, on August 3, 1730—that is, twenty-two years after, the body decided that they would not be “at any expense whatsoever about enclosing the South Fields.” A continual antagonism arose between the farmers who rented portions of the South Fields, who ploughed the ground, and the freemen who kept horses and cows and who required the land to be kept in pasture. The advice of the Recorder was taken in 1741, and his aid called in to settle the disputes between the two parties about the right of common. Law-suits followed, the costs being settled by a committee of the Corporation in June 1743. In July 1751, it was ordered “that so much of the South Fields as belongs to this corporation be laid down for grass-ground, at the expiration of the present leases thereof, and that Mr. Mayor, together with so many of the Aldermen and Common Councilmen as that think proper to go with him, take a view thereof, and receive proposals from such person or persons as shall be desirous of taking the same, and make a report thereof at the next Hall; it being the general opinion of this Hall that it will be as great advantage to all the Freemen of this Borough as to this Corporation.” The next step (January 8, 1752,) was the taking of a Survey, and the making of a Plan of the South Fields, belonging to the Corporation, to show what lands pertained to the body, and what to other persons, with a view to indicating what roads would be necessary to be made therein. The survey seems, however, to have been resolved on for ulterior purposes, which came out more explicitly at a Common Hall held March 19, 1752, when these conclusions were arrived at:

“Ordered at this Hall that the South Fields belonging to this Corporation be not let out in farms, as usual, and that Mr. Mayor and five or more of the Commissioners for the time being agree with Mr. Comyns, or his agents, for the purchase of so much of the land, and of such of the tithes of the said fields as belong to the said Mr. Comyns.

“Ordered, likewise, at this Hall, that when the said South Fields are laid down for grass ground that the commoners may turn in their cattle according to the usual stint on the first day of September in each year.

“Ordered, that this Corporation defend such person or persons as shall be molested or sued for enclosing all or any part of the said South Fields, in case such enclosure be made according to the directions of the Corporation.

“Ordered, that no part of the South Fields shall be ploughed or converted into tillage after Michaelmas which shall be in the year 1755.”

In December, the Commissioners for Letting the Town Lands, contrary to the tenor of the above resolutions, gave leases to Mr.



Alderman Ayre, Mr. Aldermen Phipps, and Mr. Oliver, of certain parts of the South Fields for twenty-one years. Two of the lessees (Mr. Phipps and Mr. Oliver) were directly charged with giving instructions about the drawing of the new leases contrary to the instructions of the Hall—in fact, with dictating their own terms.

It was anticipated that means would be taken by the poorer freemen to resist the proposed enclosing of the South Fields, and therefore the Corporation ordered that Mr. Mayor should cause a sufficient number of proper persons to be ready on the Wednesday in the second week of December to set out the boundaries of the fields in question.<sup>h</sup>

All through the following year the discontent among the freemen fermented, until in September it manifested itself in open outbreaks. The malcontents assembled in the town and South Fields and created riots on a considerable scale; to such an extent that the Corporation resolved on taking counsel's opinion how to proceed against the rioters, who pulled down the house of Samuel Hall the shepherd, and all the fences recently raised by the lessees. The next step was to order prosecutions to be carried on against the offenders; but on more mature consideration the Corporation (November 2) modified their course of proceeding, by offering them the option of affording satisfaction to the prosecutors for the injury inflicted, and of giving bail to appear at the ensuing Assizes.

The reason of this alteration of policy in regard to the rioters is not at first sight obvious; but when we learn something of contemporary events, the state of affairs becomes more intelligible. It seems a borough election was impending. On the very same day, and probably at the same meeting at which the modified resolution relative to the rioters was adopted, the Corporation (as we learn from the *Leicester Journal*) met to support the interests of Messrs. Wigley and Wrighte, the retiring members, who offered themselves for re-election, and who were Tories and Jacobites. It would therefore be inexpedient to press forward unpopular prosecutions at such a

<sup>h</sup> Mr. Geo. Daniells, Clerk to the Leicester Freemen's Deputies (who has read this chapter on its passing through the press), has obligingly supplied the author with the following note:—

"The opposition to the enclosure by the freemen may be thus explained. Previous to any enclosure of open fields, certain persons have a right of common to the growth of grass-land after the hay is taken off. This is called the 'aftermath.' The Corporation appear to have acted in an arbitrary manner in this matter, by attempting to limit the range within which the freemen were in future to depasture.

"From an estimate which is near the mark, the number of the freemen must have been not less than one-third of the householders in the Borough. It would be easy to excite in their minds the idea that the Corporation were encroaching on their privileges. Hence the turbulence which is recorded in this chapter."

juncture. A month afterwards (December 8) Messrs. Wrighte and Wigley, in an address to the electors, expressed their intention to defend the rights and privileges of the freemen in the dispute existing between them and the Corporation relative to the South Fields. Meanwhile, the Whig party was active, and James Winstanley, Esq., its leading local representative, was invited by some of the freemen to meet them at the Lion and Dolphin; the meeting being called by advertisement, in which the advertisers expressed their determination to cut down the fences in future. The *Journal* also, about the same time, contained a letter written in direct disparagement of the Corporation candidates and the enclosure movement.

The election took place in April, 1754. On the 13th, the mobs on both sides—for the Corporation had one and the Whigs had another—had fights in the streets, accompanied by bloodshed, and all the front windows of the Three Crowns and the Lion and Lamb inns were broken during the disturbances. The polling began on the 19th, and ended on the 23rd in the defeat of Major Mitford, the Whig candidate. When the election was over, the Corporation altered their tone concerning the riotous freemen, by ordering proceedings to be taken against the parties who had pulled down the shepherd's house and the fences made in the South Fields. All this tended only to inflame the resentment of the freemen—a feeling which was raised to the highest pitch in September by an arbitrary resolution passed at a Common Hall meeting. It was as follows:—"Ordered that Eardley Willmott, Esq., be applyed to by the Sollicitor of this Corporation to prepare the form of an order *for the Excluding of such of the Freemen of this Borough as this Corporation shall think proper from turning any Cows, Horses, or other Cattle in the South Fields meadows belonging to this Corporation.*"

"This," says Throsby, "was an indiscreet and an inconsiderate resolve, after long usage, big with mischievous consequences. It prompted men to acts of violence, and attempts of that sort ever will be the occasion of much evil in this place. It ought to be remembered that a small majority carried this corporate unpopular resolution. In the minority were many disinterested men; one of which was a gentleman of penetration and discretion, and a leader in all popular measures; the present Recorder [Edmund Wigley, Esq.] is honoured by being his descendant."

During the next year the irritation of the freemen exceeded endurance. They assembled in the town on the first Monday in September, 1755, and proceeded thence to the South Fields, where they took up and destroyed all the posts and rails separating the closes into which they had been divided. For a fortnight, the fires

composed of the posts and rails were kept continually blazing. It was felt by the freemen that a tyrannical Corporation was trying to rob them of their birthright privileges, and they became reckless of the damage they did while gratifying their determination to resist and to punish their oppressors. The authorities were for the moment paralyzed. On the 10th of the month they met in Common Hall, and resolved on taking counsel's opinion how to proceed against the insurgent freemen, and appointed a committee of twenty-four to enforce whatever proceedings might be resolved upon. At the same meeting they ordered that £41 be paid to Mr. Ayre, £247 to Mr. Phipps, and £223 to Mr. Oliver for the damages by them respectively sustained in consequence of the proceeding just related.

In January 1756 a committee was appointed by the Corporation to enquire into and direct what fences were necessary to be made, and at whose expense, in the South Fields; and also to determine what further opinions were necessary to be taken concerning the said fields; Mr. Mayor to call the committee together when it was desirable.

The feeling of popular indignation continued in existence unabated until April, when mobs destroyed the windows in the houses of every member of the Corporation, and the town was reduced to an appearance of desolation—many houses having no doors, windows, or window-shutters left by the rioters. A case was drawn up, narrating the riotous proceedings which had occurred in the South Fields, and explaining the terms of the leases and the claims of the freemen, which was laid before Thomas Caldecott, Esq., barrister-at-law, and which he fully answered.

As the points at issue constitute portions of a history which every living freeman must feel more or less desirous to know, I have recapitulated them in detail. The Corporation asked Mr. Caldecott whether, as they had by the present leases reserved a liberty for the freemen to turn into the fields such cattle at such times as were mentioned in the leases, the freemen could justify the destruction of the fences, and other actions at the same time committed? Was it advisable the lessees should surrender the present leases, and be supplied with new ones, containing no reservation whatever of the rights of the freemen?

Mr. Caldecott's answer was this: "Supposing these fields were the proper freehold and inheritance of the Mayor, Bailiffs, and Burgesses, I do not think the freemen could strictly justify, under the liberty given to them by the present leases, the destroying any old fences; for their liberty was only to depasture, and such liberty reserved to them was only a consistent right with the lessees of the Corporation, who equally claimed under the Corporation; but then,

it seems to be, that by the present leases the liberty to turn in by the freemen is a right allowed them by the Mayor, Bailiffs, and Burgesses to depasture; and if any fences were *since made by the present lessees, whereby such rights of the freemen have been interrupted*, I think they may remove such obstructions in order to enjoy in their rightful manner their pasturage; and therefore, in this case, I should think it most advisable for the Corporation and the lessees that the lessees should surrender up their present leases to the Mayor, Bailiffs, and Burgesses, and afterwards to have new leases granted, without reserving to the freemen themselves any right whatever, but to have the liberty reserved to the Mayor, Bailiffs, and Burgesses, in manner as is mentioned in the preceding draught; and after such new leases granted, I think the lessees respectively may bring actions against such freemen as should put in cattle without the permission of the Mayor, Bailiffs, and Burgesses."

The next query of the Corporation related to Alderman Phipps's lease. Their question was, whether, on surrendering it, he should be supplied with another, according to a draft laid before Mr. Caldecott, but with such alterations as he might think proper to make in it, for the exclusion of any freeman from turning cattle into his fields between old Candlemas Day and old Michaelmas Day, except only such freemen as the Mayor for the time being should permit to turn any cattle therein; to the end that such steps might be taken as he (Mr. Caldecott) should advise, against any freemen that should turn any cattle into the said fields, contrary to the terms specified in the lease.

Mr. Caldecott's answer to the second query was as follows: "I think the lessees should under their hands and seals, by deed, surrender their old leases to the Corporation, and all their right, title, and interest therein and thereto; and I think, in this case, an indenture between the lessee of the first part and the Corporation of the second, would be the properest instrument; because the Corporation must accept such surrender, which cannot be so properly done as under their common seal, which I think should be put to the said indenture. And I think it may be proper to have a previous order of a Common Hall for accepting such surrender of the leases; and after such surrenders are accepted, the old leases may be destroyed, but there is no necessity to destroy the old leases in such case before the new ones are granted, but the surrender and acceptance must be first-executed before the new leases are granted."

It is inferable from the opinions of Mr. Caldecott, that he thought the freemen were warranted in removing the fences made by the lessees, as their rights had been encroached upon by them; but he recommended that new leases should be drawn up reserving to

the Mayor, Bailiffs, and Burgesses the liberty of permitting such and so many freemen residing within the said Borough, as they might think fit, to turn each of them two mares and geldings, and two cows, into the meadows at certain periods specified; this proviso enabling the lessees to bring actions against freemen who turned in without the permission of the Mayor, Bailiffs, and Burgesses.

It will have been seen throughout that the Corporation assumed a right to select such among the freemen as they pleased upon whom to confer the privilege of pasturage; when it was the ancient, undoubted, and unalterable birthright of *every* freeman to turn horses or cattle into the South Fields. The Corporation had, strictly speaking, neither the authority to give nor to withhold the "liberty" of pasturage: their assumption in so doing was purely an act of innovation and usurpation.

They, however, acted on the advice of Mr. Caldecott at a Common Hall meeting held on the 2nd of February, 1757. They ordered that "the present tenants of the South Fields, on surrendering their present leases, shall have new ones granted for twenty-one years from Michaelmas last;" "that all the three fields be laid down for grass ground;" "that the freemen have liberty to turn in cattle according to Mr. Caldecott's opinion;" and "that the freemen shall turn in to the fields either on the 1st day of September or on the 12th, to take their cattle out again on the 2nd day of February or the 13th, which the Corporation shall think most proper."

These resolutions were in the main carried out; and as the freemen were not further hindered in their enjoyment of their common right (for no attempt seems to have been made to exclude any of their number from it), the quarrel ceased and the excitement gradually subsided.

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## CHAPTER VIII.

CASES OF PREMATURE INTERMENT—FRENCH PRISONERS IN LEICESTER—LOYAL ADDRESS OF THE CORPORATION ON THE FRENCH WAR—SCARCITY OF CORN—GRATUITOUS DISTRIBUTION OF BREAD—ANOTHER ADDRESS TO THE KING ON THE WAR—COMING OF AGE OF PRINCE GEORGE, AFTERWARDS GEORGE THE THIRD—EARLY FLOWER SHOWS IN LEICESTER—THREATENED INVASION OF ENGLAND BY THE FRENCH—PUBLIC SUBSCRIPTION TO FIND FUNDS FOR RESISTANCE—RESOLUTIONS ADOPTED BY THE CORPORATION—THE FREEDOM OF THE BOROUGH VOTED TO WILLIAM PITT—AN ADDRESS TO THE KING—THE TOWN WATER SUPPLY—THE SUFFOLK MILITIA IN LEICESTER—THEATRICALS IN THE HAYMARKET—DISTINGUISHED VISITORS TO THE TOWN—A CONVIVIAL PARTY—A CONTRAST: EARL FERRERS IN THE COUNTY GAOL—MR. MEYNELL'S BALL IN THE TOWN HALL—THE STAGE COACH TO LONDON—A FLOWER SHOW—MR. LAMBERT, THE BENEVOLENT GAOLER—THE LEADING ALDERMEN OF 1760 AND THEIR DESCENDANTS.

WHATEVER has happened out of the ordinary course of local events, even though unconnected with municipal affairs, or the social or political development of the inhabitants, it may be presumed is entitled to a place in this compilation. We therefore here introduce the two remarkable cases of premature interment which happened in Leicester about the year 1755. The first was that of Elizabeth Carter, who lived in St. Margaret's parish. She was apparently dead, and placed in her coffin ready to be taken to the Churchyard. Her relatives and neighbours were assembled in her house expecting to witness her burial, when she suddenly rose in her coffin from her supposed sleep of death, to their equal surprise and alarm. She survived the apparent resurrection for many years, and often conversed on the subject with a schoolfellow, who told the circumstance to the local historian.<sup>1</sup> The second instance was that of Alderman Thomas Newton. His friends were invited to the funeral; but he came to

<sup>1</sup> Throsby's *History of Leicester*, pp. 160, 161.

life again on the day before that fixed for his interment, and lived some time after.<sup>k</sup>

Early in the year 1756, the friendly relations between England and France were disturbed. Before the war was commenced, Count Beuville, and thirty other French officers, had been made prisoners and were sent to Leicester. Most of them were men of high rank of the *ancien regime*, and they were fêted by the principal inhabitants, by whom they were much esteemed for their polite and agreeable manners. They were received in all public assemblies with high consideration and a courteous welcome; and, as they expended about £9,000 during their stay in Leicester, it was of benefit to a large portion of the inhabitants. In October 1757, they were exchanged for English prisoners, and returned to France.

In March 1757, the Mayor and Corporation took proceedings to help in the prosecution of the war. Colonel Montagu's regiment was then quartered in the town; so in order to encourage recruiting they ordered the Mayor to pay 25s. to those able-bodied men among the inhabitants who should be approved of as fit persons to serve his Majesty in that regiment, who might enlist. They also gave the same bounty to naval volunteers.

The Corporation further manifested their desire to serve the king, by adopting the following address to his Majesty on the 21st day of April:—

“To the King's Most Excellent Majesty.

“The humble Address of the Mayor, Recorder, Aldermen, and Common Council of the Borough of Leicester in Common Council assembled.

“Most Gracious Sovereign,

“We, your Majesty's most Dutifull and Loyal Subjects, the Mayor, Recorder, Aldermen, and Common Council of the Borough of Leicester, beg leave to approach your sacred Person, to return your Majesty our most unfeigned thanks for the great and wise Provision you have made to defend all parts of your Dominions from the Insults and Encroachments of a Prince Envious of the Liberty and Religion we have for so many years so fully and without Interruption enjoyed under your happy Government.

“When we consider the many and great Blessings of which we are possessed, and set against them the Fires, Racks, and Exile your Subjects must suffer, should your Enemies prevail, we cannot but assure your Majesty of our Inviolable Fidelity, and that we shall cheerfully submit to whatever your Majesty and Parliament shall think necessary to strengthen your Hands that you may long Reign over a Free and obedient People, That all your Subjects may with one Heart and one Voice declare they will not be Slaves, and act up with Vigour to that Declaration.

“That your Enemies may feel the Weight of a Free Protestant People,

<sup>k</sup> Throsby's *History of the Borough*, p. 150.

fighting for their Libertys and Religion, and that your Majesty may long Reign over us, and Transmit to your latest Posterity the Government of a Protestant People, is our Duty and hearty Prayer.

“Given under our Common Seale the 21st day of Aprill, in the year of our Lord, 1756.”<sup>1</sup>

In May the Corporation ordered a “treat” to be given at the Three Crowns to the High Sheriff of the County, to Colonel Montagu, and to the other officers quartered in the town—to drink the king’s good health and success to his arms; the expense to be paid by the Chamberlains out of the public purse.

A great scarcity of corn was experienced in the second half of the year. In consequence, a riot occurred at Sheffield in August; while in November the poorer classes of Shropshire, Warwickshire, and the adjacent districts were almost starved. The effects of the dearthness of price induced the Corporation here to pass the following resolution (December 23): “In order to prevent the ill-consequences of any unlawful combination amongst the bakers within this Borough, and that the town may be supplied with bread in this time of scarcity and dearthness of corn, It is ordered that such of the country bakers as Mr. Mayor and the Justices shall think fit, may have the liberty of bringing their bread and selling the same within this Borough, without being molested, until the first day of May next, provided they keep the assize in weight and goodness, and observe all other regulations relating thereto, according to the laws and statutes of this realm in such case made and provided.”

At the same Common Hall as that at which the foregoing resolution was passed, a proposal was made for raising a sum of money for buying corn for the relief of the poor, but its consideration was deferred till the next meeting. In February (1757) the Corporation passed an order for laying out thirty pounds in bread, for the use of the poor of the several parishes in the borough, at ten pounds a week, the same to be disposed of in such manner as Mr. Mayor should think fit. During the year, wheat was sold in the market at 9s. per strike, and in consequence of the high price the people became tumultuous. In Leicester, they forced the corn from the inns into the market, but offered no injury to any person. At Mountsorrel the mob destroyed a bolting-mill, and then went on to Sileby and Loughborough, where they also destroyed bolting-mills. In other parts of the country similar disturbances occurred.

The year 1758 was comparatively uneventful. The war against France had been maintained up to its close, apparently with considerable success, and therefore the municipal body of this borough

<sup>1</sup> The spelling is somewhat modernized.



came to the conclusion to forward this address to his Majesty George the Second :

“To the King’s most excellent Majesty.

“May it please your Majesty,

“We, your Majesty’s most dutiful and Loyal subjects, the Mayor, Recorder, Aldermen, and Common Council of the antient Borough of Leicester beg leave to approach your sacred person with hearts full of gratitude, for the signal success of your Majesty’s Forces by sea and land in the several parts of the World over our enemies, whose ambitious designs of encroaching upon your Dominions and to destroy our trade made a War unavoidable.

“Your Majesty’s Schemes, planned with Wisdom, conducted with steadiness, and executed with true British Courage and Valour, have disappointed their views, by destroying their ships and consequently their trade; and which, we trust, will be a sure means of compelling them to make a solid and lasting peace—your Majesty’s only view in commencing this War. We are sensible of the heavy Burdens this War obliges you to lay upon your subjects; but, heavy as they are, we shall bear them with pleasure, as it is the only means of preserving our Religion, Liberties, and Trade.

“That your Majesty may long reign over an affectionate and free people and transmit your Virtues, with the Crown, to your Royal Family—the greatest blessing this Nation can hope for—is our constant and fervent Prayer. Given under our Common Seal this fifteenth day of December, one thousand, seven hundred, and fifty-eight.”<sup>m</sup>

The son of George the Second (known as Frederick, Prince of Wales) being dead, the grandson of the deceased king was the heir apparent to the throne. At this time he was approaching his majority. He was a good-natured, affable, agreeable young prince; well-acquainted with the language, habits, and institutions of the country—not (like his grandfather, the king) a German in interests and prejudices. On the 4th of June 1759 he came of age. The people of Leicester celebrated the event with all honour, and with the usual demonstrations of public rejoicing.

Flower shows are not so modern in their origin as may be generally supposed. Early in August, the Annual Florists’ Feast was held at the Horse and Trumpet, near the High Cross, when the best and second best broken carnations were pronounced to be those of Mr. Arnold of Nuneaton; the best whole blower of Mr. Bond of Caldecote; the second best of Mr. Loseby of the Woodgate, Leicester; and the

<sup>m</sup> The more correct orthography of this address, as compared with that of the preceding one, is noticeable. Probably the writer of the latter was a younger man who had been educated in the modern style of spelling, while the writer of the former was taught according to the more ancient style. In either case the transition from the old to the new fashion is here exemplified in public documents.

best piccottee of Mr. Mellor of West Cotes. Upwards of ninety persons dined at the ordinary.<sup>n</sup> A week after the Flower Show, three hundred and seventy persons dined at an ordinary at the Three Crowns, at the annual feast held in commemoration of the defeat of the Spanish Armada. A sermon was preached at St. Martin's church on the occasion, when all the members of the Corporation were present. James Wigley, Esq., one of the Borough Members, with other gentlemen, sat down to the dinner.

In September, there were great rejoicings in the town upon the receipt of important news of the reduction of Ticonderoga, Crown Point, and Niagara, and the destruction of the French Fleet. The bells were rung, bonfires were lighted, and illuminations were general; but they were scarcely sufficiently demonstrative to express the popular exultation, which was unbounded.

The period was, however, one of considerable anxiety, owing to the continuance of the war with France. The press-gangs were out, and in June the Parliament was informed of the preparations in progress in the French ports for an invasion of England. The topic uppermost in all minds was consequently the necessity of taking measures for national defence. In November the Corporation resolved on opening a subscription in the town forthwith, for the support of the government. On the 23rd they held a special Hall meeting to make arrangements for the promotion of the object, and adopted a series of resolutions in the style now customary. As they speak the purpose of the leading inhabitants in their own language, they are here copied:

“Resolved and Ordered, at this Hall, that a Subscription be forthwith opened within this Borough, for an immediate Voluntary Contribution to be distributed in Bounty or rewards among such able-bodied Landsmen (apprentices excepted) as, within the time or times to be limited for that purpose, shall present themselves at the Guildhall of this Borough and be enlisted (being approved by an officer to be appointed), to serve as soldiers in his Majesty's Forces upon the Terms that they shall not be sent out of Great Britain, and shall be intituled to their discharge in three years, or at the end of the war, if they choose it, pursuant to his Majesty's Order in Council, of the 11th of July last, as explained and confirmed by his Majesty's other Order in Council of the 10th of August following. The purposes of the said Subscription to be executed by the Committee hereinafter named, and by such other Gentlemen as shall subscribe and pay the sum of Ten Pounds, or upwards, in such manner as they in their discretion shall judge most expedient for his Majesty's service.

“Resolved and Ordered, that the Right Worshipful the Mayor do sub-

<sup>n</sup> *Leicester and Nottingham Journal*, August 4, 1759.

scribe the sum of One hundred pounds in behalf of this Corporation of the Borough of Leicester.

“Resolved and Ordered, that proper Books for the receiving of further Subscriptions be forthwith opened at Mr. Alderman Smalley’s and Mr. Alderman Simpson’s in this Borough, and at such other places as the said Committee shall think proper.

“Resolved and Ordered, that if, after the Service to be promoted by the intended subscription shall be fully answered, there be any surplus of the Subscription money left, the same be forthwith paid to the several subscribers, or their legal representatives, in proportion to the sums by them respectively subscribed.

“To be a Committee: Nicholas Throsby, Esq., Mayor; William Wright, Esq., Recorder; Mr. Alderman Ludlam, Mr. Alderman Gabriel Newton, Mr. Alderman Smalley, Mr. Alderman Phipps, Mr. Alderman Simpson, Mr. Alderman Sismey, Mr. Richard Beale, Mr. William Orton, and all persons who shall subscribe Ten Pounds or more.

“All Gentlemen of the County of Leicester, or within this Borough, who are willing to promote the service hereby intended (which is to strengthen his Majesty’s hands now at a time when we are threatened with a Powerful Invasion, and to show their Affection and Zeal for his Majesty’s Sacred Person and Government) are desired to send in their names and Subscription Money to the places above-named.

“Ordered, that Mr. Mayor desire the Committee to meet at the Guild-hall of this Borough, at Eleven of the Clock on Monday morning next, in order to the putting in execution the said resolutions: and it is ordered that any two or more of the said Committee shall likewise be a Committee for putting the said resolutions in execution.

“Resolved and agreed, that Mr. Mayor do order the resolutions of this Hall relating to the Subscriptions to be published in such a manner as he thinks proper.

“Resolved and Ordered, that Mr. Mayor shall take up so much money at interest as shall be necessary to make up the sum of One Hundred Pounds for the subscription on behalf of the Corporation.”

A week after the date of the meeting when these resolutions were adopted, another Common Hall meeting was held, at which the Corporation manifested their high opinion of William Pitt, the premier and leader of the House of Commons, by voting to him the Freedom of the Borough. On the same occasion an address to the King was agreed to, of which the subjoined is a copy:

“May it please your Majesty,

“We, the Mayor, Recorder, Aldermen, and Burgesses of the ancient Borough of Leicester, in the County of Leicester, in Common Council assembled, beg leave to approach your Sacred person with Hearts dilated with Joy, Duty, and Gratitude, to offer you our sincerest thanks for the happy effects of your Great Wisdom in frustrating the designs of our

ambitious enemy, and by your well-planned schemes giving such life and spirit to your Fleets and Armies that have immortalized your Majesty's name in every quarter of the world, and have convinced mankind that a Protestant Prince that governs a Free Protestant People, and is ambitious of no more power than what the Constitution of his Kingdom admits of, is greater than the most absolute Monarch.

"Your Majesty's Paternal affection to your people has gained you the hearts of your subjects (every Prince's best supports); and Gratitude, as well as Duty and Interest, will animate them with the utmost zeal in defence of your Sacred person and your Dominions, and enable you, in due time, to procure a solid and lasting Peace, so that your subjects may, without interruption, enjoy their Trade and property (your Majesty's only aim in entering into this war). And that your Majesty may long enjoy that inestimable blessing of Peace, without any attempts from an enemy to disquiet you, is the constant and hearty prayer of us, your Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects.

"Given under our common seal, the 30th day of November, in the year of our Lord, 1759."

A spirited appeal to the patriotism of the inhabitants was made in an address, to which a response was given by a subscription amounting to £314 5s., of which £226 16s. was paid to fifty-four men enlisted by the Committee.

An explanation of the state of the town in reference to its Water Supply at this date—a hundred years ago—is furnished in an arrangement for the keeping in repair of the public pumps. Originally, a number of draw-wells were distributed throughout the town, in every parish and ward, and persons called Well Reeves were annually appointed to look after them; the inhabitants taking the water they required from these wells daily. The Well Reeves assessed upon the householders what they required to cover the expenses of keeping the wells in proper order. The Mayor and Aldermen, finding that pumps would be more useful than wells, directed them to be placed over the wells; and in this way Cank Pump, another in Red-cross square, with others elsewhere, were erected. An assessment was directed to be made to meet the disbursements, but several of the householders refused to pay their proportionable share of the charges. In November 1759 the Mayor and Aldermen, at the request of the Common Council, ordered an annual election to be made of two Pump Reeves, whom they empowered to raise such a levy as they required, on the basis of the land tax; defaulters to be proceeded against in the same way as persons were who refused to pay the poor-rate.

The winter of 1759 was rendered unusually gay in Leicester by the arrival of the Suffolk Militia, who were stationed here for some months. They were commanded by Colonel Nassau, Sir Robert

Davers (Lieutenant Colonel), Major Affleck, Captains Sir John Rouse, Sir John Barker, Bunbry, Acton, Holt, Golding, Brand, Gregby, Evans, and Bacon, and other officers. With them came the Duchess of Hamilton (the wife of Colonel Nassau), Lady Ann Hamilton (her daughter), Lady Barker, and other ladies of distinction. The Assembly Rooms, East Gates, was then also the Theatre, which was under the management of Messrs Durravan; the performances taking place on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. The principal performers were Mr. Murden, Mr. Blanchard, Mr. Walcott, Mrs. Quelch, and Mrs. Cooper. They played "The Busybody," "Catherine and Petruchio," "George Barnwell," "The Upholsterer," "The Suspicious Husband," "The Double Disappointment," and similar pieces. The Duchess of Hamilton bespoke on one occasion "The Recruiting Officer," and "High Life Below Stairs;" and other ladies had similar bespeaks.

The visit of the Suffolk Militia to the town gave a stimulus, not only to the amusements, but to the public and private hospitality of the inhabitants. At a Common Hall, held on the 8th day of February, it was ordered "that Mr. Mayor give such a feast to the Duke of Grafton and the Suffolk Militia officers now in the town as he shall think proper." The Duke of Grafton was the Lord-Lieutenant of Suffolk, and a brigadier-general, and on Monday, the 11th of February, reviewed the Suffolk Militia in the neighbourhood of this town, when an immense concourse of people was drawn together by the spectacle. In the evening, Messrs. Durravan's company performed by desire of the Misses Wright the "Conscious Lovers." The theatre in the East Gates was crowded by a distinguished and fashionable audience, including the Duchess of Hamilton, the Duke of Grafton, Lady Ann Hamilton, the Hon. Col. Nassau, the Hon. John Gray (brother to the Earl of Stamford), Sir John and Lady Barker, Sir John and Lady Rouse, Sir Robert Davers, Major and Mrs. Affleck, Mrs. Acton, Mrs. L'Hoop, Hugo Meynell, Esq., and Mrs. Meynell, William Wright, Esq., and the Misses Wright, Miss Pochin, and other ladies and gentlemen of rank in town and county.

On the day after, the Mayor and Aldermen paid their compliments to his Grace the Duke of Grafton, the Hon. Col. Nassau, and the other officers of the Suffolk Militia, and invited them to a cold collation at the New Exchange. The members of the Corporation attended in their gowns; the night being spent in mirth and conviviality. The feast was the costliest ever given, up to this date, by the body corporate, "and," says Throsby, "one of the most inebriating. Mr. Mayor, at night, was assisted by the duke down stairs; and the duke soon after by the town-servants; there not being a soul left in

the room capable of affording help to enfeebled limbs : Field Officers and Aldermen, Captains and Common Council, were perfectly at rest—all were levelled with the mighty power of wine."

While all this enjoyment at the theatre and revelling at the banquet was the order of the day in Leicester, a prisoner was lying in the County Gaol, then standing in Blue Boar Lane, whose name and whose ultimate end were notorious to the nation. The captive was taken to his place of confinement on the 21st of January, and lay there in the custody of Lambert the gaoler till the very day on which the Suffolk Militia was reviewed, when he was removed to the Tower. The *Leicester Journal* shrank from even naming the prisoner, whose family had been identified for centuries with our county, and whose crime was murder. While the nobles and ladies who have been mentioned were night after night laughing merrily at the sallies of Messrs. Durravan's comedians, there lay confined in a prison-cell not far distant, Lawrence, Earl Ferrers, his hands stained with the blood of his steward, and only a few months left to him to live before meeting an ignominious death at Tyburn.

On the 22nd of February the local festivities were maintained by Hugo Meynell, Esq., and the gentlemen of the Leicestershire Hunt, who gave a ball to the ladies and gentlemen of this town and neighbourhood, to which they also invited the officers of the Suffolk Militia and their wives and lady-friends. The ball was opened at seven by Lady Ann Hamilton and the Hon. Captain Fielding. About eleven they sat down to a most elegant entertainment, so sumptuous a collation having probably never before been served within the walls of the old Guildhall. One hundred and sixty dishes supplied by the Cranes' Inn were placed on the tables, and two hundred persons of distinction sat down to partake of the viands.

In March, this year, a Stage Coach commenced running between London and Nottingham, passing through Market Harborough, Leicester, and Loughborough, which performed the journey, "if God permitted," in two days. The proprietors (Richard Nedham and Company) would not be accountable for any plate, jewels, writings, watches, and rings, unless entered and paid for as such; the highwaymen who then infested the heaths frequently stopping coaches and stripping passengers of their valuables.

In May, there was to be seen in Mr. Lambert's garden at the County Gaol a very fine show of tulips in full blow; but what was still more extraordinary, the gaol doors were continually left open, not a felon having been committed since the previous Assizes; and the few debtors immured were so considerably cared for by their humane keeper (the father of the celebrated Daniel Lambert) that

they did not wish to escape.<sup>o</sup> When this estimable man died, a few months later in the year, the *Leicester Journal* said of him that he was "highly regarded for his benevolence in the gentle execution of his office. He did not only treat the prisoners with the utmost tenderness and compassion, and support 'em from his own table, but made frequent overtures to their creditors to obtain their discharge."

In July the Leicestershire Militia under the Hon. John Grey (brother of the Earl of Stamford) were called out and embodied. Powder, balls, arms, accoutrements, drums, swords, halberds, and so forth, were supplied to them from the Tower of London.

It may serve to place on record who were the leading men of the town, in the last year of George the Second's reign, if we extract from the Hall Book the names of the Aldermen of the Wards elected on the 15th of August in that year. At a "Court of Aldermen" (as it was designated),

"Mr. Alderman Ludlam made choice of the High Street Ward, late Mr. Brushfield's.

"Mr. Alderman Newton his own, the Saturday Market.

"Mr. Alderman Miles his own, Belgrave Gate.

"Mr. Alderman Smalley the Silver Street, late Mr. Ludlam's.

"Mr. Alderman Hall from High Cross into the Redcross Street.

"Mr. Phipps his own, the Church and Sanvy Gate.

"Mr. Alderman Marten below the North Gates, late the ward of Mr. Lee.

"Mr. Alderman Simpson about Saint Nicholas's Parish, late Mr. Marten's.

"Mr. Alderman Chapman from High Cross to North Gates, and Bond Street, late Mr. Smalley's.

"Mr. Alderman Denshire to have the Southgate Ward and

"Mr. Alderman Ayre his own, being the Gallowtree Gate."

Of these persons only a few of the descendants are recognizable, after the lapse of a hundred years. The name Ludlam is no longer known in Leicester in public affairs; though once one of the principal, before the time of the siege of Leicester and afterwards. The name Newton is perpetuated by the charity still in operation. The name Miles stands still high among us in its professional connection. The name Smalley has disappeared; but the Alderman (then a grocer) having married a sister of Sir William Halford, had a daughter, Hester, who being the cousin of Sir Charles (the last of the Halfords in the direct line) represented her maternal ancestors, and when she became the wife of Dr. Vaughan of Leicester, conveyed to her eldest son, Henry, a pretension to the extinct baronetcy. He afterwards, on assuming the maiden name and arms of his maternal grandmother,

<sup>o</sup> *Leicester Journal*, May 21, 1760.

became Sir Henry Halford, baronet, his position as king's physician aiding him doubtless in acquiring the title. Of Mr. Alderman Hall's descendants no information has reached us. Of Mr. Alderman Phipps's the same remark may be made. Mr. Alderman Marten was a bookseller and stationer. Mr. Alderman Simpson was a grocer, who read the Old Testament in the Hebrew. Of Aldermen Chapman and Denshire fame reports nothing, except that the latter was a strong Jacobite. Of the Alderman last named (Ayre) it may suffice to say that he ultimately settled at either Ashby Folville or Gaddesby, and Edward H. Cheney, Esq., is his descendant.

On the 25th of October, George the Second died at Kensington Palace, in his 77th year, after a reign of more than thirty-three years' duration.

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## CHAPTER IX.

PROCLAMATION OF GEORGE THE THIRD—ADDRESS OF CONGRATULATION BY THE CORPORATION—THE MURDER OF A PEDLAR IN LEICESTER—DETECTION OF THE MURDERERS—THEIR EXECUTION IN CHURCH GATE—REFUSAL TO SERVE ON THE CORPORATE BODY—THE KING'S BIRTHDAY—REMARKABLE ADDRESSES TO THE YOUNG KING AND QUEEN—MOVEMENTS OF THE LEICESTERSHIRE MILITIA—MESSRS. DURRAVAN'S COMPANY OF PLAYERS—MR. BOULTON'S CONCERT—MILITARY MOVEMENTS—THE MESSIAH PERFORMED IN LEICESTER—BIRTH OF GEORGE THE FOURTH—A LOYAL ADDRESS—THE RACES—A FRIENDS' WEDDING—MINOR EVENTS—AN OLD-FASHIONED MAYOR'S FEAST—DISEMBODIMENT OF THE MILITIA—AN INCLEMENT WINTER AND PUBLIC SUBSCRIPTION—PASSAGE OF TROOPS THROUGH THE TOWN—ESTABLISHMENT OF THE WEDNESDAY MARKET—CONCLUSION OF PEACE WITH FRANCE.

THE news of the king's death was scarcely known in Leicester before his grandson was proclaimed. In the town records, the two events are mentioned in the same paragraph, which is thus worded :

“ At a Common Hall, held on the 30th of October, in the first year of the reign of our sovereign lord, George the Third, King of Great Britain, &c.,



in the year of our Lord 1760, Ordered that (since it hath pleased Almighty God to call to his mercy our late sovereign lord, King George the Second of Blessed Memory) this Hall do attend the High Sheriff of this County in their Formalitys, to proclaim the High and Mighty Prince, George, Prince of Wales, our only lawful and rightful liege lord, George the Third, by the Grace of God King of Great Britain, France, and Ireland, Defender of the Faith, and so forth; and that there be a bonfire, and as much wine and ale given away as Mr. Mayor shall think fitt."

On the day of proclamation in the town all the church bells were rung, Halbert Men attended the authorities to the place of proclamation, and a bonfire was burnt in the Market Place; but the burial of George the Second prevented further rejoicings for the time, and on the day when he was interred in Westminster Abbey (the 11th of November) the great bell in every church in Leicester was tolled from seven to ten in the evening.<sup>p</sup>

On the same day, however, the Corporation adopted an Address of Congratulation to the young monarch on his accession, which was as follows:

"To the King's Most Excellent Majesty.

"The Humble Address of the Mayor, Bailiffs, and Burgesses of the Borough of Leicester.

"Most Gracious Sovereign,

"We, your Majesty's most Dutiful and loyal subjects, the Mayor, Bailiffs, and Burgesses of the Borough of Leicester, with thankful and joyful hearts congratulate you upon the accession of your most sacred person to the imperial throne of these Realms, wishing you a long and prosperous reign over a happy and affectionate people.

"We were deeply affected with the Great Loss this Nation sustained by the sudden Death of your royal grandfather, our late most Gracious Sovereign of blessed memory, at so critical a juncture; but our misfortune would have been much less supportable had it not been happily and amply repaired by the peaceable possession of your sacred Majesty to his Crown and Dignity amidst the loudest acclamations of your united and faithful subjects—an event doubly auspicious to these your Kingdoms as it has instated you, Most Royal Sir, in the full possession of those Rights and Prerogatives which are legally derived to you from your royal Progenitors; and as your Majesty was graciously pleased at your Entrance into the Regal Government to make a public Declaration of your paternal Affection for this your native Country—of your firm Attachment to the Constitution, both in Church and State—of your earnest intentions to promote the Glory and Happiness of these Kingdoms—and of your resolution to endeavour to prosecute the just and necessary War in which we are now engaged, in the manner most likely to procure an honourable and lasting Peace; whence

<sup>p</sup> See Hall Book of the date.

your loyal subjects have just grounds to hope for every thing that can contribute to the Magnificence and Splendour of your reign and the Happiness and Prosperity of your Kingdoms.

"You may, Great Sir, be assured of our Hearty Endeavours on all occasions to promote the Glory of your Majesty and the Welfare of our fellow-subjects.

"And that there never may be wanting an heir of your Illustrious Family to possess your virtues and inherit your Crown, and who may captivate the Hearts as well as rule over the Persons, of your subjects, is, Most Gracious Sovereign, the ardent wish and earnest prayer of us, your Majesty's most dutiful and affectionate subjects.

"Given under our common seal, this Eleventh day of November, in the year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and sixty."

In this document no Jacobite reserves concerning the king's rightful succession are conveyed or understood. It contains the clearest and fullest possible recognition of his right to the throne and to his prerogatives, which are said to be "legally derived" from his "royal progenitors." George's declaration had done much to cement the popular feeling in his favour; while the entire failure of all the enterprises of the Chevalier, and his son, Charles Edward, had rendered the cause of the Stuarts for ever and utterly hopeless. The Jacobites died off one by one; and all thought of the Young Pretender ceased, except among a few sentimental spinsters, and old convivial companions, who, when in their cups and with closed doors, toasted "Charley over the water." George gave the climax to his popularity on his accession, by the speech which he delivered in opening Parliament on the 18th of November. "Born and educated in this country," said his majesty, "I glory in the name of Briton." He also referred to the flourishing state of the kingdom, the successes of the war, and the extinction of internal dissensions; and he declared the ends of the war to be the support of the Protestant interest, the independence of the national allies, and a safe and honourable peace.

Some local events excite in us a thrilling interest from the horrible circumstances attendant on them—an interest probably deeper than that created by subjects more instructive and more important. Of these events, a murder, which took place in Leicester in January, 1761, is an example.

Early on Thursday morning, the 29th of that month, a travelling pedlar named Edward Brown, was found dead in a chamber in a common lodging-house, kept by widow Johnson of Church Gate, situate nearly opposite Butt Close Lane. The deceased was found with his throat cut, and three wounds in his left breast, one of the latter reaching to his heart. The consternation created in the town

by the occurrence was almost instantaneous and extreme. A coroner's inquest was held on the body the same day, at which various persons were examined as to what they knew of the matter. The lodging-house keeper said that the deceased, with two other persons, a man and his wife, had come to her house the previous day, and asked to be provided with the use of one room, in which they might be all lodged. They were then shown into a room, in which they seated themselves. They afterwards passed the evening very merrily. Next morning, however, when widow Johnson went down stairs to the street door, she missed the key. She returned up stairs to inquire for it; and, on reaching the stair-head, she discovered the body of the deceased, covered with blood, on the floor. She immediately descended into the yard, and aroused her neighbours, who came to her assistance. A journeyman baker, who lodged in the same house, deposed at the inquest that in going to bed he passed through the room where the deceased and his companions slept, on his way to his own chamber, and that he saw them all in bed. On the following morning, before daylight, he was disturbed by noises in the adjoining chamber, and asked what o'clock it was. The woman (he believed) answered him, and said she could not tell. Shortly afterwards he rose and left the house, the key (which they had asked for) remaining in the door. He heard one of them follow him and fetch it. This was a few minutes before six o'clock. At that hour, a woman living in the house adjoining the widow Johnson's, heard a dismal cry in one of her chambers, and the voices of persons speaking loudly and passionately. Then followed a terrible groaning, something fell to the floor like a heavy lump, and all was still.

The jury brought in a verdict of "Wilful murder by persons unknown."

The two companions of the deceased having fled, they were pursued to Kettering, in Northamptonshire, where they were captured on the evening of Thursday. Sixteen guineas and several shillings were found upon them, with ribbons and other effects to the amount of £20. In the woman's bundle was discovered an apron covered with blood, of which there were spots on the man's hands, waistcoat, and other clothes. They confessed their guilt, and were committed to Northampton Gaol, by Mr. Hill of Rowell, on the Friday.

At the ensuing assizes, on March 13, the prisoners were placed on their trial for the murder, under the names of Thomas and Elizabeth Castledine. The husband at once pleaded guilty,—the wife not guilty. She alleged, in her defence, that her husband had told her some days before the deed was done, that he had heard Brown had money, and he was determined to rob him; that she used her utmost

endeavours to dissuade him from the commission of the act; and that he promised her he would desist from it; but that on the evening before the murder, when they were in bed, he told her he certainly would rob Brown, and she then renewed her entreaties to him not to do so, he promising again to refrain from the crime. At four o'clock in the morning, however, he said he would rob Brown, and in two hours after (when the baker's man was gone) he went to the deceased's bed-side and said, "Mr. Brown, you've got money—I'm determined to have it." Brown then got up and refused to part with his money, and a scuffle ensued, in the course of which (she said) she endeavoured to take her husband off the deceased, who, while she was engaged in this attempt, struck her and threw her down, at the same time biting her hand. Her husband (she proceeded to say) offered to return to Brown what he had robbed him of, if he would let them go; but this Brown refused to do, threatening to bring them both to justice. Soon after she felt something warm running over her bosom, which led her to say to her husband, "Lord, Tom! what's this?" He answered "Blood—better his than yours." She then struggled, got from under Brown, took her bundle down stairs, waited in the house-entry nine or ten minutes, and in a few minutes more she and her husband went away together.

Such was the woman's not incredible defence; but as she confessed to the murder on her first apprehension, the jury found her guilty, and the unhappy pair were sentenced to be hanged on the Monday following, that is, on the fourth day after the trial.

In order to strike terror in the popular mind, the authorities ordered the gallows to be erected on the open space in the Butt Close, opposite to the house in which the deed had been committed. The fate of the condemned couple must have excited, with horror for the crime, no small degree of commiseration for the culprits; for the husband was scarcely twenty-one years of age, exceedingly penitent, and had borne a good character before he killed Brown, and (to use the quaint language of the *Journal* of the date) was "a likely young fellow"; while the wife, also young, was delicate and prepossessing in appearance, the daughter of respectable parents living at Newcastle-upon-Tyne (whose name she kept concealed), had "an uncommon share of understanding," and had received a good education. It was natural, therefore, that they should move the pity and compassion of the people.

Thomas Cherry (as his real name proved to be) was a native of Ramsey, Huntingdonshire; but for the greater part of his life he had resided at Hertford, where he was taught the trade of a joiner. He could read and write well. When he committed the offence he was

not in want of money. In his last moments he said his wife was quite innocent of the murder, and had attempted to dissuade him from the commission of the robbery. He said they had only been married six months, and she had always behaved as a dutiful and obedient wife. Both conducted themselves with great propriety and decency during their confinement in gaol. The poor woman (who, after her condemnation, reiterated what she had said on her trial) showed a becoming resignation of spirit when her doom was sealed. She made other statements of no great importance, but acknowledged her gratitude to the judge for his clemency, and to the minister who attended her and her husband.

On the morning of the execution, between eight and nine, they were taken out of the cells of the gaol into the house, to be pinioned. The poor woman was then overcome with her emotion—she fainted. Soon afterwards she recovered herself, and behaved with great fortitude and composure, saying, “My God died to appease a multitude, and why should I repine?” At nine o’clock the pair were put into the cart, with the executioner, and conveyed to the gallows. Here they prayed very devoutly for some time, being aided by a clergyman. They then rose from their knees, and kissed each other affectionately. The wife said to her husband, “Now, my dear, am I guilty or not guilty?” He replied, “My dear, you are not guilty.” The hangman then, on his knees, asked forgiveness of each separately, and proceeded to fulfil his appointed task. The ropes being fixed, and the caps pulled over their faces, the cart was drawn away from beneath the wretched couple, and they were left to suffer the agonies of an ignominious death. When taken down, the bodies were handed over to the surgeons for dissection.

The poor woman’s defence has an air of truthfulness about it, and there can be little doubt that a modern jury would not have convicted her of the offence for which she suffered. She may be considered one of the victims of a sanguinary penal code. Her melancholy end could not fail to affect the feelings of the inhabitants living at the time of the execution, and it is not yet forgotten among the older townspeople, to whom the circumstance was related in their earlier days by their parents or seniors.

For some reason now unknown, the refusal to serve on the corporate body was formerly not an uncommon occurrence. In what motive a resolve so seldom expressed in modern times originated, we are not prepared to explain. In the first year of George the Third’s reign, this reluctance to hold a public office had become so extensively manifested that at a Common Hall, held on March 4, the subjoined order was adopted: “Whereas, divers persons have been duly elected

into the office of Common Councilmen, or of the Company of the Eight and Forty of this Borough, and have contemptuously refused to take upon themselves the said office or place into which they have been so elected, It is therefore ordered at this Hall that Mr. Halford, Solicitor for this Corporation, shall advise with such counsel as Mr. Mayor, Mr. Ludlam, Mr. Smalley, Mr. Simpson, Mr. Sismey, and Mr. Belton, and he shall think proper, to draw an order to be laid before a Common Hall, for the obliging any person or persons as have been heretofore elected into the office of Common Councilman, or of the Company of the Forty Eight of this Borough, or that shall at any time hereafter be elected into the said office, to take upon him or themselves the said office; and also to be advised how and in what manner to recover the same, and to have such order drawn by counsel and to take such further advice concerning the same as shall be thought requisite, at the charges of the Corporation."

The loyal attachment to the young monarch was testified by the celebration of his birthday yearly. On the 4th of June of the year under notice, all the officers and gentlemen in the town were invited by Mr. Mayor to drink a glass of wine and spend the evening at the New Exchange. The enthusiasm of the country in favour of his majesty was, however, greatly increased on his marriage taking place shortly after. George was in his twenty-fourth year when he espoused the princess Charlotte of Mecklenburg Strelitz, the second daughter of the late duke of that province. The ceremony took place on September the 8th. It was followed by the Coronation of the king and queen on the 22nd. An ominous incident which was remembered at the conclusion of the American war occurred at the return of the procession from Westminster Abbey: the largest and most valuable diamond fell from his Majesty's diadem, and was for some time lost, but soon afterwards found and restored.

In Leicester, an ox was roasted whole for the benefit of the populace, the principal inhabitants dined together, cannon were discharged by fourteen gunners engaged for the purpose, bonfires were set blazing, all the bells rang during the day, and the Light Horse band played suitable music; so that the Coronation Day passed off jubilantly. This was not all: the Corporation ordered Addresses to the king and queen to be prepared for presentation. In these documents, the civic authorities spoke with a plainness which will amuse the modern reader. They are here inserted:

"To the King's most excellent Majesty.

"The Humble Address of the Mayor, Bailiffs, and Burgesses of the Borough of Leicester.

"May it please your Majesty,

“We, your Majesty’s most Dutiful and Loyal subjects, the Mayor, Bailiffs, and Burgesses of the Borough of Leicester, humbly beg leave to present our most sincere congratulations to your Majesty on the joyful event of your Majesty’s royal Nuptials, and to add our most hearty wishes that it may give as great domestic Bliss to your Majesty and your royal consort as it does public happiness to your people.

“The repeated Glories which in quick succession have distinguished your Majesty’s auspicious reign—the great advantages resulting from them to your subjects,—and, above all, that unparalleled Goodness which hath so amply displayed itself in your Majesty’s early age, could not but fill us with the most comfortable hopes of the long continuance of the Happiness and Prosperity of these Kingdoms. But how greatly are these hopes enlarged by your Majesty’s happy union with a Princess so accomplished as to add a fresh Lustre even to your Majesty’s Throne—an union from which we derive the pleasing expectations of seeing a royal race of Britons spring from a British king, inheriting his virtues, formed by his wisdom, and imitating his great example—devoting themselves with your Majesty’s zeal to the arduous but noble task of adorning and protecting their native Country.

“That it may please the Almighty to fulfil this expectation by blessing your Majesty’s Nuptials with a numerous progeny, glorious and good as their royal Parents; that your Majesty and your most illustrious Consort may long enjoy the exquisite delight of seeing them the boast of this and the admiration of other nations; and that there never may be wanting one of your Majesty’s immediate Descendants to sway the Sceptre of these realms, and dispense to our latest Posterity the blessings we ourselves enjoy,—is the ardent prayer of your Majesty’s most dutiful, most Loyal, and most affectionate subjects. Given under our common seal the Eighteenth day of September, in the year of our Lord 1761.”

The Address to the Queen, though briefer, was equally pointed and expressive :

“To the Queen’s most Excellent Majesty.

“The Humble Address of the Mayor, Bailiffs, and Burgesses of the Borough of Leicester.

“May it please your Majesty,

“We, his Majesty’s most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Mayor, Bailiffs, and Burgesses of the Borough of Leicester, most humbly beg leave to Declare to your Majesty our unfeigned joy on your happy arrival in these kingdoms, and more particularly on your most auspicious Nuptials with our August Sovereign. The Goodness of his Heart ensures your Majesty’s domestic Happiness. At the same time, the virtues and accomplishments with which your Majesty is so eminently adorned, give us the happy assurance that his future cares for the public good will be alleviated by all the Sweets of Conjugal Felicity.

“It is our earnest prayer that your Majesty’s happy Nuptials may be

blessed with a numerous offspring, possessed of all the virtues of their illustrious parents, and that one of their immediate Descendants may, to the remotest ages, enjoy the Government of these Kingdoms, and be like our present Gracious Monarch, the terror of his Enemies and the Darling of his people. Given under our common seal the 18th of September, 1761."

During the remainder of this year, the even tenor of events in the town was undisturbed, and nothing happened worthy of particular reference.

The year 1762 opened with warlike movements, hostilities being declared against Spain on January the 4th. On the 9th, the King's Declaration of War was read at the customary places in Leicester. The procession of the Corporation, with the Halberd Men, was increased by the addition of Col. McDouall's regiment of foot, which was then quartered in the town.

The movements of the Leicestershire Militia now occupied the attention of the inhabitants. On the 6th of February, and for some time previously, they had been at Sissenhurst, and were then to be relieved by the Royal Cheshire Militia. On the 12th they were quartered at Maidstone, Town Malden, and the villages adjacent. In March, all the balloted men turned of 35 years, with the substitutes of the same age, were discharged. On the 6th of February, upwards of a hundred soldiers were drafted from McDouall's regiment; the greater part turning out to volunteer, and they left the town in high spirits. On the 8th of March, the Leicestershire regiment was reviewed near this town by General Whitmore. At the close of the month they left the town for Chester.

With the almost continual presence of a military force in Leicester, and consequently of a body of officers, the place was enlivened by social intercourse, and public amusements were the order of the day. Messrs. Durravan opened with their company, at the Theatre on the Coal Hill, on the 15th of January. On the 20th they played "Tamerlane the Great;" Mr. Stanton taking Tamerlane, and Messrs. Parsons, Durravan, Murden, and Blanchard the other characters. Mrs. Godwin and Mrs. Stanton were the principal actresses; and the former was highly popular, odes having been addressed to her in the columns of the *Journal*. In March (while McDouall's regiment was here) the company represented the "Tempest" five times in succession to crowded houses; the stage machinery in use on the occasion far exceeding in completeness anything ever seen here before. In April, "Othello" was enacted to a "crowded and polite audience." On the 3rd of May, Messrs. Durravan proposed to conclude their season with "The Merry Wives of Windsor;" but they kept open during the Fair Week.



The recreations of the inhabitants were not restricted to theatricals, a concert of vocal and instrumental music being given in the Town Hall, on Wednesday, the 21st of April, by Mr. Boulton, organist. It was announced to begin at seven o'clock. The musical reader will judge of the state of his art at that period by reading the programme:

## ACT 1.

Overture in Alexander.

Harpsichord Concerts.

## SONG.

Bassoon Concerto by Mr. Scamerdine.

Sixth Concerto by Stanley.

## ACT 2.

Overture in Scipio.

Concerto Festing.

Bassoon Solo, Mr. Scamerdine.

## SONG.

10th Concerto Corelli.

After the Concert a ball was to take place; and thus the middle classes of Leicester diverted themselves more than a hundred years ago.

On the 17th and 18th of May the Warwickshire Militia marched into Leicester. In the week following, the Leicestershire Militia was quartered in Harborough, Lutterworth, and Hinckley. When the king's birthday was celebrated, on the 4th of June, the Warwickshire Militia, commanded by Major Sir Roger Newdegate, Bart., were drawn up in the Market Place, colours flying, and then fired three volleys in honour of the day.

There were constant movements of military in this locality in June. In its second week, the first division of the Lancashire Militia, commanded by their Colonel, Lord Strange, arrived here on their march for the camp at Winchester. The second division, under Lieutenant Colonel Townley, followed the day after. The men were noticed as "straight, handsome fellows." On Saturday, June the 12th, the first division of General Holmes's regiment arrived here on their route to Sandy Heath, and on Monday the 14th the second division. Although they had marched three hundred miles (from Scotland), they came from Nottingham in one day, and went hence to Northampton the next day. They were mostly Scotchmen. On the 19th, the Royal Cheshire Militia marched into this place, on their return to their own county; the day after, the Warwickshire regiment left here for Worcester; and on the 28th, the Leicestershire marched into the place from the market-towns already named.

At this time, the Rev. Mr. Hanbury, of Church Langton, was in the midst of his musical and other speculations. Under his auspices, the oratorio of the Messiah was performed in St. Martin's Church on Tuesday, June the 22nd; on Wednesday, Judas Maccabeus; and

on Thursday the oratorio of Sampson. The Church Langton band, under the leadership of Dr. Hayes, undertook the music.

The proceedings of the Corporation were almost entirely routine, this year, except that on the 2nd of August they came to a conclusion respecting inhabitants who refused to serve as Common Councilmen, when elected. It will have been borne in mind that such examples were by no means infrequent, and therefore some provision for the case was needed. This was found by the Mayor and Aldermen enacting a bye-law to check the recurrence of the refusals; under authority of which they levied a fine of £30 upon any inhabitant declining to serve as a Common Councilman, after having been duly appointed to the office. One recusant was a Mr. Robert Peach, against whom proceedings were ordered to be taken by Mr. Halford, the Town Solicitor, under the bye-law.

All the warm wishes of the local authorities, expressed in their loyal congratulations to George the Third and his queen on their marriage, were gratified on the 12th of August by the birth of a prince, who afterwards succeeded to the throne as George the Fourth. When the news reached Leicester, the inhabitants demonstrated their delight by ringing the bells all day; and in the evening the principal people met at the Exchange, at the invitation of the Mayor, and were there entertained with plentiful supplies of wine and ale, in which they drank many healths to the royal family and the young prince, amid loud huzzas. The Corporation thus addressed the king in reference to the auspicious event:

“May it please your Sacred Majesty, To permit your Dutiful and Loyal subjects the Mayor, Bailiffs, and Burgesses of your faithful Borough of Leicester to present to your Majesty their unfeigned Congratulations on the Birth of a Prince and the happy recovery of our Gracious Queen.

“Every addition to the Domestic Bliss of our August Sovereign would fill us with the truest joy, though unconnected with our own Interests: how much greater is our satisfaction, when, in his private Happiness, we behold a precious Pledge of the long Continuance of our Country's Prosperity. Your Majesty's illustrious House hath ever abounded with Heroes, who have been the Gallant and successful Defenders of Civil and Religious Liberty: We therefore consider every increase of it as an addition to our own security, and a confirmation of our pleasing hope that the inestimable Blessings which are enjoyed by ourselves will be conveyed in their full extent to our posterity.

“Great as our joy is, on this important occasion, it is still heightened by the late Glorious Success of your Majesty's Arms. We reflect with inexpressible pleasure that at the very time when your Majesty and your People were blest with an heir apparent to your Throne, one of your Enemies strongest fortresses and most valuable possessions was submitting

itself to your Majesty's Government; and as it graciously pleased the Divine Providence to join together these great Events, we humbly beg leave to join them likewise in our Dutiful Congratulations. Given under our common seal this 22nd day of October, 1762."

The Races in September were accompanied by a concert, given by Messrs. J. and H. Valentine. The first violin was taken by Signor Piffetti (lately from Italy) who performed a solo. In addition to this, there were cock-fighting at the Cranes on the two Race Days; ordinaries at the Three Crowns and the Three Cranes each day; and an Assembly for the ladies and gentlemen each evening at the New Assembly Room, Coal Hill. "There was a prodigious deal of genteel company both days," says the *Journal* of the week, "and a brilliant assembly each evening."

In the same week a Friends' wedding took place, and is thus recorded by the *Journal*: "The same day (Tuesday) were married at their meeting-house in this town, Mr. Matthew Cartwright, of Oadby (one of the people called Quakers), to Miss Hannah Burgess, of Groby Lodge, a very agreeable young woman, with a large fortune. A great number of friends attended the ceremony, and nearly one hundred dined together at the Lion and Lamb."

In October, the Messrs Valentine gave the first of their subscription concerts, in which they performed selections from Alberti, Corelli, Geminiani, Stanley, Humphries, and Mudge.

Two deaths of inhabitants possessing local distinction, also occurred this month—that of Mr. Thomas Pares, senior, at his house in Leicester, and of Alderman Gabriel Newton, in the seventy-ninth year of his age. Mr. Newton's body was buried in All Saints' Churchyard, with great honour; the Mayor, Aldermen, Town Clerk and Chamberlains attending in all their "formalities," and the Great Mace, covered with black crape, being carried before his worship, followed by the sergeants, with their maces, and the other town officers.

The great civic feast was given this year with unusual *eclat*. On Monday, November the 20th, Samuel Oliver, Esq., Mayor, invited a large number of gentlemen to a grand entertainment in the Town Hall. He was honoured on the occasion with the company of the Right Hon. Lord Wentworth, Sir Thomas Palmer Bart., member for the County, James Wigley, Esq., member for the borough, Thomas Boothby, Esq., Lieutenant-Colonel of the Leicestershire Militia, and all the officers of that corps; and Peter Carteret, James Winstanley, Clement Winstanley, Anthony Keck, jun., Chas. Boothby Skrymsher, William Pochin, George Pochin, Edward Hartopp, John Palmer, Thomas Cave, Robert Bakewell, Joseph Greaves, Richard Beresford,

Thomas Jee, and John Bass, Esqrs., all the officers from the different *corps* recruiting in the town, the clergy of the town and neighbourhood, with many other gentlemen, numbering altogether four hundred. The entertainment, consisting of every delicacy in season, was served up in two courses, each consisting of one hundred and fifty dishes. After it was over, loyal and other toasts were drunk; as the King, Queen, and Royal Family; our Admirals and Generals; the Noblemen and Gentlemen of the County; "Such a Peace as Posterity shall approve, or a Continuance of the War;" and so forth. It was two o'clock on the following morning before the company separated.

We conclude this year's annals with noting that the Leicester-shire Militia was disembodied in December; the Duke of Rutland announcing the fact under his hand and seal, on the 18th of the month, and this being accompanied by a letter from the War Office, expressive of his Majesty's great satisfaction with their seasonable and meritorious service.

The winter of this year was unusually inclement, and the privations of the poor were in consequence severe. Towards the close of January, James Wigley, Esq., one of the members for the borough, forwarded £50 to the Mayor for distribution among such poor householders as received no parochial relief. Twenty pounds was added to the amount by the Corporation. A town subscription was also commenced, collected by the Mayor, clergy, principal inhabitants, and parish officers; the total amount thus raised being £319 18s. 4d., which was given away among 935 poor families. The trade was stagnant, and every necessary of life increased in price. So rigorous was the season, that about the middle of February two deaths occurred in this locality from exposure to cold—one near the Northgate, and a second in the parish of Belgrave. The darkness of the nights also favoured the operations of housebreakers, a gang of whom attempted to break into several dwellings and warehouses; and on one occasion the same persons (it is supposed) stopped a gentlewoman and her maid in the street as they were returning from the play, but on their screaming the fellows decamped. Messrs. Whitley's company of comedians had the Theatre Coal Hill, for the season commencing in January.

Early in March, three troops of Lord Albemarle's dragoons (which had for some time been quartered here) proceeded to Nottingham. Three troops of Sir Robert Rich's dragoons also passed through the place *en route* on the 9th; and on the same day, the second division of Albemarle's dragoons entered the town, resting here a few days. The Marquis of Granby's Blues were also expected in Leicester; while some troops were stationed at Nottingham and Northampton. Towards the close of the month, Colonel Campbell's

battalion of Highlanders, all attired in their peculiar costume, arrived in the town; having just returned from Germany. They were on their way to Scotland.

On the last day in March, a market for the sale of fat and lean cattle and sheep, on Wednesday, was begun in Leicester. A good many head of cattle were exhibited and several were sold. The holding of the market had been preceded by a resolution of the Corporation, passed at a Common Hall, held on March the 10th, which was thus simply expressed:—"Ordered that a Market be opened on every Wednesday hereafter, in this Borough, for the sale of Fat and Lean Cattle."—An announcement in the *Leicester Journal* had also thus made it known:—

"Borough of Leicester: to wit.

"Notice is hereby Given, That a Market will be held on every Wednesday, in the Market Place, within the said Borough, for the Sale of Fat and Lean Cattle and Sheep."

Peace with France having been concluded, commonly known as the "Peace of Fontainebleau," great rejoicings were made everywhere accordingly. In Leicester, on the 5th of May, a great Day of Thanksgiving was observed. In the forenoon the Mayor, attended by the Aldermen in scarlet gowns, and the remainder of the Corporation robed, proceeded to St. Martin's Church, where a sermon was preached on the occasion by the Rev. Mr. Haines, from Psalm xlvii., verses 8 and 9. As soon as service was ended, the Corporation returned to the Town Hall, and was there joined by the High Sheriff of the County and a great number of gentlemen. The entertainment at dinner was served up in two courses and was elegant and sumptuous. Dinner being over, an Ode to Peace, written by Mr. Charles Villiers of Nottingham, and set to music by Mr. John Valentine of Leicester, was performed in a grand chorus of voices and instruments. About four o'clock the procession through the principal streets commenced, having been first marshalled in Townhall Lane. It moved on slowly in the following order, the music playing "God save the King:—"

Halbert men, two and two.

Gunners, two and two.

Drums and fifes.

Two Lodges of Freemasons.

The Tyler.

Two present Masters of Lodges.

Three late Masters.

Two Junior Wardens.

Two Secretaries.

Two Senior Deacons.

Two Junior Deacons.

The other Tyler.

Trumpets.

A grand Band of Music, voices and instruments.

The High Sheriff of the County.

Clergy, Officers, and Gentlemen, two and two.

The Mayor of the Borough and Recorder.

Aldermen in their scarlet gowns, two and two.

Aldermen below the Chair, two and two.

Common Councilmen in their formalities, two and two.

Tradesmen and so forth, two and two.

Drums and fifes.

JASON on horseback, on each side a page.

The Bishop's Verger on horseback.

THE BISHOP,

In an open landau, drawn by six horses, with three postilions and four pages, all habited. His lordship in a gown and cassock, a mitre of wool

on his head; in one hand the Book of Common

Prayer, in the other a woolcomb.

A Shepherd and Shepherdess on horseback.

Another Shepherd and Shepherdess.

A stage, built on a waggon, with two combers at work, two doublers, two spinners, a framework-knitter at his calling, and a crown of wool on the stage.

A procession of about twenty combers, all habited in wool wigs, sashes, ruffled shirts, and grey stockings, three and three.

The entire procession passed along by the High Cross, High Street, Coal Hill, Gallowtree Gate, through the Lion and Lamb yard, Friar Lane, Southgate Street, Peacock Lane, and so back to the Market Place; where, in front of the Exchange, the Ode was again performed. The streets were lined all the way by crowds of people; and not only were the windows and balconies filled with the spectators, but they were stationed on the roofs of the houses and the tops of chimneys. In many places were arbours, interwoven with garlands, and crowned with wreaths of flowers, in which some of the inhabitants entertained their friends with various dishes. In other places sheep, hogs, and lambs were roasted whole. In fact, the joy was universal. After the procession was over, the gentlemen withdrew to the Exchange, where they drank the healths of the King and Queen in bumpers of ale and wine. In the evening, a ball and cold collation were given to the ladies. The front of the Exchange was brilliantly illuminated, the centre figure being a full-length effigy of his Majesty.<sup>a</sup>

On Wednesday, the 15th of June, in the evening a great quantity of rain fell, attended with violent claps of thunder, and sharp and quick flashes of lightning. St. Mary's steeple was struck on the south side and cracked, several stones being removed from their places: on the north-east side many large stones were stripped from the innermost brickwork, and fell upon the body of the building. A person who was approaching the town from the Foss Road, said the

<sup>a</sup> *Leicester Journal*, May 7, 1763.

lightning was terrible, and seemed to fall quite to the ground, and to singe the earth as it ran along.

## CHAPTER X.

A CHASE AND A CAPTURE—A ROBBERY AT COVENTRY—THE “FOYS” GANG—APPREHENSION OF SOME OF ITS MEMBERS AT LEICESTER—JOHN DOUGLAS, THE LANDLORD OF THE BELL HOTEL, TRIED, CONDEMNED, AND EXECUTED FOR ROBBERY—LOCAL DEATHS AND MARRIAGES—MRS. LINWOOD’S SCHOOL—THE FIRST BANKERS IN LEICESTER—DEATHS FROM DRUNKENNESS—THE LEICESTER FLYING MACHINE—THE MAYOR’S FEAST—THE “MARCH OF INTELLECT”—DEATH OF LORD ROLLO IN LEICESTER—DEATH OF MR. WIGLEY OF SCRAPTOFT—ANOTHER MAYOR’S FEAST—BIRTH OF THE SIXTH EARL OF STAMFORD—A GREAT FIRE—PROPOSED FOUNDATION OF THE INFIRMARY—CHEESE RIOTS AT LEICESTER AND CAVENDISH BRIDGE—MEETINGS OF INFIRMARY PROMOTERS—A JACOBITE MAYOR—REFUSAL TO “SLOPE THE MACE.”

It was towards the close of an early day in June, 1763, that a post-chaise was seen hurrying rapidly towards Leicester, the passengers within being a man and woman. The chaise was pursued by horsemen, who proved to be from Warwickshire, and who, having succeeded in overtaking the fugitives, immediately returned with them on the way they had arrived. So severe had been the chase that the horse of one of the pursuers fell dead from exhaustion, and was left near the Dane Hills. The curiosity of the whole town was of course roused by the circumstance. After the lapse of a week, news came from Coventry of a robbery at the Castle Inn, in that city, on the fair day, committed by two well-dressed men and two women, who, having been shown into an upstairs room, in which stood a bureau containing a considerable sum of money, broke open the bureau, and took therefrom cash and plate to a large amount. On the landlord (Bayley) entering the room to look after his property, one of the men seized him, and held him, while the other three persons, for the moment, escaped. As soon as he could free himself, the landlord went in search of the thieves, and succeeded in apprehending the man who had been in his apartment; the other three eluding discovery for a short time; but traces of two of them being found, they were followed

in the direction of Leicester. They were the man and woman captured near the town as just stated.

The prisoners were taken before Mr. Alderman Hewitt of Coventry (evidently a very active magistrate), who, after a long examination, committed them to gaol, with three others of the gang, who were taken at the Crane Inn, in that city. The culprits proved to be John Philips, William Ogden, Margaret Brown (*alias* Ogden), Thomas Sherrard, Margaret Wood, and Margaret Clark. They were all stylishly dressed, and several of them entered Coventry well-mounted; the last-named (a middle-aged female) wearing a black hussar hat, small-sprigged printed red and white gown and black capuchin, and riding on a grey mare with hunting side-saddle. Philips had on a blue coat and waistcoat, with yellow gilt buttons, and a dark brown wig, and entered Coventry on a black mare. It was discovered there were not fewer than sixteen members of this gang in Coventry, on the day of the robbery, and that they had perpetrated several other similar acts on the same day on which they broke open the bureau at the Castle Inn. Further evidence was soon forthcoming to show that these persons constituted a portion of a formidable band of dangerous and desperate confederates, known as "the Foys," whose deeds had rendered them a terror to the inhabitants of Cumberland, Westmoreland, and Northumberland; and who, not long before the occurrence of the apprehensions here noticed, had committed numerous depredations and robberies in London, Middlesex, Worcester, Lichfield, Derby, and elsewhere. Acting on the information he had obtained, Alderman Hewitt came over to Leicester, and was the cause of seven other members of the gang being taken into custody in this town on the morning of Sunday, June the 12th. Six of them were sent to Coventry in two post-chaises under strong escort, one man was committed to our town gaol, and one man and one woman were admitted to bail.

At this time, the Bell Hotel was still one of the principal inns in Leicester. It was (as the reader will remember) the inn selected by Major Mitford, the Whig candidate, at the election of 1754, as the place of rendezvous for his supporters. It was in the main the same building as that now standing, and was in high repute then, as it has been for a hundred years subsequently.

Two years before the date of these events, a good-looking, gentlemanly young man, visited Leicester, and stopped at the Bell Hotel. He paid attentions to the landlord's daughter, which proved acceptable, and which were followed by an offer of marriage. His conduct appearing unexceptionable, the girl's father permitted her to marry the stranger. Sometime after, the landlord died; upon the occurrence



of which event, Mr. Douglas (for such was the name he bore) succeeded to the business of the Bell Hotel. When he assumed this position, he increased the favourable impression he had made, by a zealous observance of religious duty, by punctuality and honesty in his dealings with his neighbours, and by abstaining from fraud even under circumstances in which he was sheltered from suspicion. He was, besides, a most affectionate husband, a tender parent, and remarkably kind to his wife's poor relations. John Douglas was, in fact, in the estimation of the whole town of Leicester, a *really good citizen*.

But it happened, to the surprise of everybody, that among other disclosures made by the prisoners in Coventry Gaol, was this one—that this man had been transported from Rochester for stealing a silver tankard in the year 1757, and had escaped from transportation. He was therefore apprehended without ceremony, and immured in the prison of the County of Leicester, then standing in Blue Boar Lane. Evidence was accumulated against him, and accordingly he was put on his trial at the Leicestershire Assizes, held at the Castle on Saturday, July the 30th; the issue being life or death. He was dressed in a white broad cloth coat, trimmed with black, and a black silk waistcoat. His comparative youth (for he was scarcely thirty), and his affecting behaviour on his trial, moved the court to compassion, and brought tears on the cheeks of even those who were ordinarily indifferent spectators. William Marsden, clerk to Sir John Fielding (the celebrated London magistrate), swore to the identity of Douglas, adding the affirmation that not a single feature in his face had undergone alteration, the only difference being that he now wore his hair tied, while formerly it was too short for that purpose. Douglas neither said anything in his defence, nor made any attempt to prove that he was not the person mentioned in the indictment. Two clergymen and many respectable tradesmen spoke in high terms of the prisoner's character while they had known him, and the jury debated a quarter of an hour before they would bring him in guilty; but the Judge (Mansfield) said they had discharged their duty like honest men, observing that he was glad to find that, when the overflowings of compassion had in some measure abated, justice had been done; and adding that if the prisoner were an angel from Heaven, he must, under the circumstances, be convicted. He therefore sentenced Douglas to be hanged by the neck until he was dead, and might God have mercy on his soul!

A reprieve of one month was, however, granted. That interval was diligently employed by the friends of the condemned man in endeavouring to procure a remission of the sentence. As he had given information concerning the proceedings of the gang, which was

of importance in promoting the ends of justice, it was hoped that the effort would be attended with success. A memorial, praying that the extreme sentence of the law might not be enforced, was handed round for signature in Leicester. To it were appended the names of the Mayor, Justices, most of the Aldermen and Common Councilmen, and upwards of 150 gentlemen and principal tradesmen of Leicester, and it was laid before George the Third by the Earl of Egremont. On Sunday, August 21, an express was received from the Secretary of State's office with a respite for Douglas until the 5th of September, a petition in his favour having been presented to the King by the Earl of Denbigh on that day, representing the convict's services to the State; in consequence of which the Judge was sent for to make his report; but all in vain. Though hopes had been entertained that the condemned man would be spared, he was executed on the gallows near this town on the day appointed.

Thus, in the prime of life, was poor Douglas put to death, leaving a widow and fatherless offspring, for the offence of returning from transportation before the term of his banishment had expired. Such was the aspect of justice to the grandfathers of our grandfathers one hundred years ago!

Four of the offenders above named—Margaret Clarke, William Ogden, Margaret Brown, and John Philips—were capitally convicted at Coventry on August 1, and were executed at Whitley Common on August 10. Margaret Clarke, known as "Long Peg," was one of the oldest and most expert pick-pockets in England: she picked the pocket of the young Pretender of a gold watch when the rebels lay at Manchester in 1745. She said that as she knew she must die sometime, it made no great difference whether now or hereafter. At the place of execution, the hangman displeasing her in fixing the rope, she attempted to knock him out of the cart.

It is characteristic of human affairs that no matter what may be-tide individuals, the daily life of mankind is little altered thereby in its manifestations; and thus even when a tragedy is in progress, the world makes holiday or diverts itself as though such things were not. So, while the fate of poor Douglas was suspended in the balance, the civic banquet, the flower show, and the Races, were held as usual; though the whole town was concerned apparently for the unfortunate culprit. The Venison Feast took place on the 8th of August, when the Mayor and Corporation in their robes attended divine service in St. Martin's church, where a suitable sermon was preached on the occasion. The dinner was served at the Three Cranes, and 356 persons sat down to it; Mr. Wright, one of the members for the borough, and other gentlemen of distinction, being among the company.

The Races took place this year on Wednesday, September 14; and there was a larger company of ladies and gentlemen present than had been observed for some years previous. The stewards were Thomas Cave and John Palmer, Esqrs. Francis Mundy and Anthony Keck, Esqrs., were chosen stewards for the year ensuing.

The deaths of three persons took place in the town this year which are worthy of record. The first of these claiming attention was that of the Rev. John Jackson, master of Wigston's Hospital, whose name has occurred in an earlier chapter. He was a metaphysician and biblical student of considerable eminence. He published a chronological work in three volumes quarto, and thirty-five books or tracts besides. His most valuable work, the Greek Testament, he never finished; though he had expended years of research upon the undertaking, having consulted all the ancient versions and manuscripts to which he could gain access. He was a Unitarian. The second person whose demise we have to notice was Mr. Alderman Smalley, of whom the *Journal* states that he was "an eminent grocer," and that his remains were deposited in the family burial-place at Norton in this county. The third notable who died during the year was Mr. John Lewin, senr., an "eminent hosier, generally esteemed and respected by all who knew him." "In his profession," adds the *Journal* of October 29, "he had acquired a very large fortune, with great reputation." Yet, it may be added, the monument to his memory now lies in the churchyard of St. Mary, falling to pieces; there being apparently no descendant of his to preserve it from the ruin which seems certain.

It would be giving an imperfect epitome of the year's incidents, if we omitted all reference to the marriages, having mentioned the deaths of three once well-known townsmen. At this date, only the weddings of the wealthy were considered worthy of insertion in the *Journal*, and these were specially noticed. Thus (September 24) we find this paragraph: "Last week was married at Balstone in this county, Mr. Tilley, attorney-at-law, to Miss Powers, an agreeable young lady, with a handsome fortune." Again (October 1) the following occurs: "Last week was married at Chesterfield in Derbyshire Mr. Burgess, a hosier in Leicester, to Miss Pearce of Chesterfield aforesaid, an agreeable young lady with a handsome fortune." Among others, also, this announcement occurs (December 3): "On Monday last was married at St. Mary's Church in this town, Mr. Dalby, an eminent hosier, to Miss Eape, both of this place."

An advertisement, here copied from the *Leicester Journal* of December 24, connects the generation now passing away with the people of Leicester a century ago in a remarkable manner:

"Mrs. LINWOOD

"At LADY-DAY NEXT proposes to OPEN

A BOARDING SCHOOL for Young Ladies in Belgrave-gate, Leicester, where they will be instructed in needle-work and every other useful and genteel accomplishment. They who please to favour her undertaking may depend on the utmost Care being taken of their Morals, as well as every other part of their Education, by their humble Servant,

"HANNAH LINWOOD.

"As many of her Friends may chuse to place out their children before that time, she has taken a House for the present, near the Horse Fair, Leicester, lately occupied by Mr. Parsons (the property of Mrs. Birstall), and where she proposes to teach till the other House can be made ready, and will begin there on Monday the 23rd of January next."

It may be necessary to say that the lady here mentioned was the mother of Miss Linwood, whose needlework produced for her so widely-extended a reputation for its artistic design and delicacy of execution.

Up to this period, no banking establishment had been carried on in Leicester. The commercial concerns of the locality were managed in a very primitive manner by one or two of the principal tradesmen, who received deposits and who undertook to make payments in London for their customers. But, at the close of the year, what may be called a "bank" was commenced in the town, which was thus made known to the public in the *Leicester Journal* of December 31: "We are credibly informed that Mr. Joseph Bunney and Mr. Thomas Pares, both of this place, propose taking upon their notes, payable to Bearer, any sum that shall be offered to 'em, and will allow £2 per cent. per annum for every sum amounting to £25 and upwards, from the end of thirty days after the time of its being advanced."

With the families of Pares and of Paget the business of banking has been thus identified in Leicester for four or five generations in the former case and three in the latter.

In looking back to the local events happening in the year 1764, we find very little to invite especial attention; although, taken as a whole, they mirror the life of the inhabitants during that period. As season followed season and holiday followed holiday, our ancestors toiled or played; but apparently with greater contrast between work and festivity than now, and with ruder energy in their indulgences. One of the earliest incidents of the year was the sudden decease of one of the Town Bailiffs, named Godfrey, who, in the language of the day, was an "eminent" butcher (everybody being formerly considered "eminent" as everybody is now esteemed "respectable"), and who, after drinking a pot of ale at a public house, fell down in a fit of

apoplexy. "He was a person," says the *Leicester Journal*, "well respected by all his acquaintance, and of great humanity in his office." His humanity redeems somewhat the mode of his decease, and therefore he passes on to posterity in this narrative.

The Bailiff, Godfrey, was not the only man who died this year at the tavern; as his example was followed by Mr. Pyke, a barber, who having drunk three pots of ale, undertook for a trifling wager to drink ten more within the hour. He had swallowed nine, when the landlord seeing him much "in liquor," took the other pot from him. The bacchanalian barber then attempted to get up and stagger home; in doing so, he fell upon the floor, whence he was taken up, removed into another room, and laid upon a bed, and there died immediately. On the 9th of March, the coroner's jury held their inquest and brought in their verdict, "Died through excessive drinking." This was plain speaking, and calculated to have a wholesome moral effect.

The readers of these papers who remember the great change effected in locomotion, by the transition from coach travelling to railway communication, and the impression of great speed experienced by those who, having gone from Leicester to London in the "Telegraph," the "Defiance," or the "Rapid," in twelve or fourteen hours, were whirled in three or four from this place to the Metropolis, may conceive what were the feelings of the good people of Leicester, when, in 1764, having previously been shaken that distance in a day and a night, they were promised to be carried it in a "Flying Machine" in one day! The enterprising persons who paralyzed the public with the bewildering proposal thus advertised themselves in the *Leicester Journal*:

"LEICESTER.

"*FLYING MACHINE*;

"in ONE DAY;

"To Carry Four PASSENGERS:

"Begins Monday, April 9th, and will continue to set out from the Cranes Inn in Leicester;<sup>\*</sup> Monday, Wednesday, and Friday mornings, at Two o'clock precisely; and gets to the Ram Inn, Smithfield, London, the same night; sets out from the Ram Inn, Smithfield, every Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday mornings, at Two o'clock precisely, and gets to Leicester the same night; each Passenger to pay £1 5s., and so in proportion to any part of the said Road; Children in Lap and Outsides at half-price.

"Perform'd if God permit by

"SAMUEL OLIVER, of Leicester;

"THOMAS STOAKES, of Dunstable."

<sup>\*</sup> The Three Cranes in Gallowtree Gate, an Inn which was taken down some years ago.

Let the reader imagine the task of rising at two o'clock on a raw spring morning to set out on a journey for London, and being rocked along all day until midnight in the Flying Machine, and then reaching the dimly-lighted streets; and then compare the wearying journey with the present mode of travelling—and be thankful!

Shortly after this arrangement had been begun, a company, consisting of Messrs. Stoakes (Dunstable), Oliver (Leicester), Howe (Derby), Tenant (Manchester), Richardson (Leeds), and Glanvil (Sheffield), was formed to run from Nottingham, Derby, and Leicester, in one day, *six* days a week, and to make the return journeys as often. The machine was advertised to be on steel springs.

In May, the Inniskillen dragoons were billeted in the town, and were reviewed on Belgrave Leys by General Jeffries, in the presence of a large concourse of people, and many ladies and gentlemen.

The king's birthday was celebrated with great rejoicing on June the 4th, the day being ushered in with the ringing of bells; two troops of Sir Charles Howard's dragoons being drawn up in the Market Place and firing volleys in honour of the occasion in the forenoon. A grand entertainment was given in the evening, at the house of Mr. Samuel Oliver, the Three Cranes Inn, by the Mayor, when the members of the Corporation, the military officers, and others partook of the banquet.

A dinner was given on the 4th of September, by the Earl of Denbigh, at his house at Newnham Paddocks, to the Mayor and Aldermen of this borough, when they were "most elegantly and sumptuously entertained." It was not improbably an electioneering movement.

At the Races, on September 12 and 13, the Burgesses' Purse, run for on the first day, was won by Mr. Turner's chesnut horse, "Spot," and the Gentlemen's Purse, run for on the second day, was won by Lord Albemarle Bertie's grey mare "Countess."—"There was each day," says the *Journal*, "very good sport, and the greatest appearance of ladies and gentlemen that has been known for many years. This meeting would undoubtedly have been much the most numerous ever known here; but was in some measure prevented by an idle report gaining credit that the small-pox and fever raged in the town, and had carried off many of the inhabitants. We have, however, the pleasure to inform the public that so far from any dangerous or infectious distemper, that in the parish of St. Martin, which is considerably the largest in the town, there has been only one funeral in the last six weeks, and not more than one family in the whole town has at this time the small-pox."

September 21, being the day appointed for the election of a Mayor

for the year ensuing, Mr. Richard Beale, an "eminent" clothier, was elected to the office unanimously. When the Mayor held his Feast, on the 12th of November, more than 700 invitations were issued, and Basil, Earl of Denbigh, and many of the neighbouring gentry, honoured his worship with their company. The entertainment was given in the old Town Hall, but was supplied by the landlord of the Three Cranes. It was served up in two courses, and consisted of every delicacy which the Town and County could furnish.

The "march of intellect" began in Leicester about this date; an "inimitable piece of art," called the "Microcosm," being introduced to the wondering gaze of the inhabitants at the "New Exchange" in October. It consisted of Architecture, Sculpture, Painting, Music, and Astronomy, with a vast variety of moving figures. At the same time, the "learned and ingenious Dr. Griffis," delivered lectures on Natural and Experimental Philosophy, in the Town Hall, amid universal applause; exciting the admiration of all visitors, and entirely answering "all the just expectations of the curious."

As the winter approached, the high price of food and the depression of trade rendered the condition of the working classes extremely deplorable, and excited the compassion of their wealthy neighbours. A public subscription was accordingly opened. Mr. Alderman Phipps imported a ton of salted butter from Ireland, and retailed it at prime cost, in order to afford some comfort to the sufferers. On the 8th of December, the principal townsmen met at the Town Hall, and raised £90 on the spot, which was increased to £190 in a fortnight. Collections were made by the several parishes, and several private donations were also given away; a committee being appointed to superintend the proper distribution of the money subscribed.

Among the deaths of the year were those of Mrs. Oliver, the wife of Alderman Oliver, whose name received special mention in terms of high eulogy in the columns of the *Journal*; and of John Bass, Esq., an "eminent" wine merchant, whose departure was designated as a "public loss." The only wedding which occurs as worthy of remembrance is thus given in the local paper of December the 29th: "On Thursday last, was married at St. Martin's Church, in this town, Doctor Vaughan to Miss Nessey Smalley, second daughter of the late Mr. Alderman Smalley." The progeny of this pair included the late Sir Henry Halford, Bart., Mr. Baron Vaughan, Mr. Charles Vaughan, the Rev. E. T. Vaughan, and others.

Mr. Whitley's company of players provided the townspeople with indoor recreation during the winter evenings. They came under the severe criticism of the *Journal*, which recommended to the men a fencing-master and a dancing-master to the ladies.

The distress among the poor continued throughout the winter. The subscription commenced to mitigate its effects amounted, in the first week in January 1765 to £215; and this did not include a donation by James Wigley, Esq., one of the borough members, of £50, which enabled the poor people of the town to supply themselves and families with bread for two weeks. So high was the price of grain that the Corporations of Leicester and Nottingham petitioned the House of Commons to take into consideration the fact, and devise some means of speedy relief. In Leicester, it was alleged, wheat was sold for 58s. per quarter, and the poorer housekeepers must have perished of starvation had not the more opulent inhabitants assisted them by donations.

Duelling with the small sword was at this date of very common occurrence—every man with any pretensions to gentility carrying his hanger at his side, and facilities being thus offered for bloody quarrels. At the conclusion of January, Lord Byron and Mr. Chaworth, members of the Nottingham Club, in London, had a dispute at the Star and Garter, respecting the game on their estates, which were contiguous. They drew their swords upon each other, and in the struggle Lord Byron ran his antagonist through the body. Mr. Chaworth died shortly after. On Wednesday night, February the 6th, the corpse of the unfortunate gentleman lay in state at the Three Cranes, in this town, on its way to the family burial-place.

A coaching system having been commenced, connecting Leicester with the metropolis, it was soon extended; the “Flying Machine” of Messrs. Stoakes and Oliver finding a competitor for public favour in “Post Coaches with postillions, on a new plan,” setting out from the Golden Cross, Charing Cross, and the Bell and Swan with Two Necks, Wood Street, London, every Monday, Wednesday, and Saturday mornings at four o’clock, and from the Lion and Dolphin, Leicester, in return, at the same hour on the same days. The road taken passed through Harborough, Northampton, Woburn, Dunstable, St. Alban’s, and Barnet, to London.

On May the 27th, the militia of this county, commanded by the Hon. Colonel Grey, were clothed, armed, and embodied, in order to be exercised for twenty-eight days, pursuant to act of parliament. On the 4th of June (the king’s birth-day) they were drawn up in the Market Place, and fired three volleys in honour of the day. It was observed of them by the *Journal* that “though principally composed of young lads taken from the plough and the loom, who had never seen any service, they made amazing progress in learning the use of arms.”

On Sunday, June the 2nd, Andrew Lord Rollo, a Scotch peer,



who was travelling to Bristol for the benefit of his health, died at the Three Crowns inn, in this town. He was the fifth Lord Rollo, and Lieutenant Colonel of the 22nd Foot. He was aged sixty-one. He had distinguished himself in the reduction of the island of Dominique, and at the sieges of Martinique and the Havannah. His funeral took place in St. Margaret's Churchyard, being accompanied by military honours, and attended by the Leicestershire Militia and all the military then in Leicester. It was said that Lord Rollo, before his decease, requested his lady to have his body laid in the churchyard, in as open a place as could be found, and as much in soldier-like style as possible. The monument over the grave still remains.

Mr. Wigley died on June the 21st, at his house at Scraptoft. He represented Leicester from the year 1737 to 1765. He was of the old Tory and Jacobite school of politics, but a man of amiable and benevolent character. He planted the groves near his mansion, and raised a mound of earth in order that the poor living in the locality might be employed, and provided with bread for their families, particularly during the winter season. His portrait is preserved in the Town Library. An obituary notice of Mr. Wigley, signed G. C., Evington June 29 (and probably from the pen of Mr. George Coleman), highly eulogises the deceased. It says: "As a husband, a brother, and a son, he had few equals. A good landlord, and a compassionate master; and his house, his lands, and his heart, were always open to his poor, industrious neighbours. Thus lived honoured, and died lamented, this true friend to Church and State, constant at public worship, and exemplary in his behaviour there; and whilst piety and goodness exist in the world, his name will be dear to the latest posterity."

In July, Anthony James Keck, Esq., of Stoughton Grange, canvassed the town as a candidate for the vacancy in the representation of the borough. During the election, he gave an entertainment daily at the Three Cranes, and one guinea to every landlord of a public-house to regale his neighbours, money to all the workshops in the town, and hogsheads of ale to the populace. Mr. Keck was irresistible—he was elected without opposition.

The popular sports of this date were more varied, perhaps, than at present. The *Leicester Journal* of September the 7th announces, for example, that "all persons who take delight in the manly and noble exercises of single sticks and wrestling are desired to take notice that at the Cross Keys at Desford, in the county of Leicester, on Friday, the 27th of this instant September, will be given the Annual Prizes of a gold-laced hat for the best gamester at single sticks, and a pair of buckskin breeches for the best champion at wrestling." Strangers

who might wish to make trial of their manhood and dexterity were promised fair play on the occasion.

Another improvement was made in the coaching system before the year expired—a vehicle being constructed with steel springs, which rendered locomotion easier than before. It set out from the Three Cranes every morning at four o'clock, and at the same hour from London. The proprietors engaged to accommodate six inside passengers, and to go the journey in one day. The proprietors formed a company.

One of the most enterprising men in the town, about this time, was Mr. Oliver, landlord of the Three Cranes, who was mayor in 1762. He erected the first house at Stoney Gate, and the mansion on the hill at Birstall, which was subsequently enlarged by Mr. Mansfield. When he retired from innkeeping (as he did this year), he resided at Birstall.

On September the 21st Mr. Alderman Chambers was elected Mayor. On November the 18th he gave a grand entertainment in the Guildhall. About eleven o'clock, the Mayor, Aldermen, and Common Council met in the hall, and thence proceeded to St. Martin's Church, where a sermon was preached by the Rev. Mr. Haines. At the conclusion of the service, the body corporate returned to the hall in the order in which they had left it, and then about two hundred gentlemen sat down to the Feast. Among the company were Lord Wentworth, the Hon. and Rev. Dr. Noel, Sir John Palmer, Bart., Anthony James Keck, Esq., James Winstanley, Esq., Nathan Wrighte, Esq., Thomas Boothby, jun., Esq., and many others. "The dinner was extremely elegant, and served up in two courses of ninety dishes each. There was great plenty of venison, pheasants, woodcocks, and game of all kinds, with every other variety the season and country could produce. The company did not break up till near one o'clock."<sup>a</sup>

Although in these chapters events occurring outside the town are not ordinarily recorded, we may deviate from the rule in the case of those in which the inhabitants would at the time of their occurrence take a lively interest. The birth of George Harry, the sixth earl of Stamford, grandfather of the present earl, was an event of this description. He was baptized in London in December; but the earl, his grandfather, gave a grand entertainment at Steward Hayes, and a great bonfire was raised on "Old John," (as the *Leicester Journal* designated the hill now known by that name,) in order to celebrate the occasion. Eleven waggon-loads of hard wood, four and twenty score of wood-kids, five tons of coal, a number of barrels of pitch, and other combustible

<sup>a</sup> *Leicester Journal*, Sept. 28, 1765.

materials, constituted the natal pyre, the blazes of which would be discerned throughout Leicestershire and neighbouring counties in the dark winter evening on which it was consumed.

As the local observances which recurred with unvarying regularity have been hitherto fully noticed, it becomes unnecessary hereafter to repeat references to them unless they be accompanied by some unusual incident or circumstance.

A remarkable fire took place on January the 16th, 1766. It broke out in the Market Place, in a stable belonging to Mr. Wm. Clarke, carrier, adjoining to the stables of the Lion and Lamb and Dolphin inns, and the house and outhouses of Mr. Partridge, grocer. One of the premises of the latter-named person was a warehouse filled with pitch, tar, oil, hemp, and other combustible matter, and above stairs with several barrels of gunpowder. Mr. Chambers, the Mayor, was very active in assisting to bring the engines to the spot, and in keeping order among the populace. Captain Lewis, of the Dragoons, also caused the drums to beat to arms, and, with the assistance of the soldiers, contributed to the preservation of the buildings, and prevented the spread of the conflagration. Mr. and Mrs. Partridge, with a young child, and Mr. Jackson, a lodger, and the servant-maid, ran undressed into the street, on the first alarm of fire, and with their cries aroused the neighbourhood. Mrs. Partridge had the nerve, when the fire was at its height, to burst open the powder-room door, and with the help of other persons to remove the barrels. The fire burned for some time with great fury, but was extinguished before communicating with the adjoining buildings. It was said it originated in one of Mr. Clarke's servants leaving a lighted candle in the stable, attached to the wall.

Early in this year Dr. Watts of Medbourn, a physician, commenced his benevolent advocacy of the foundation of the Leicester Infirmary. In the columns of the *Leicester Journal* he made frequent appeals to the affluent on behalf of his proposal; pointing out the examples of Winchester, Exeter, and Northampton, as worthy of imitation. In that paper of May the 10th, he showed how the poor would have the benefit of ventilation and cleanliness, in a well-constructed and well-drained Infirmary, and in subsequent numbers answered the objections of opponents—for he had to encounter such; no good scheme being ever without bitter enemies. On the 22nd of July the public were informed by advertisement that proposals having been laid before the High Sheriff (Charles James Packe, Esq.) and the Grand Jury of the County, at the Assizes, for the establishment of a Public Infirmary, and the sum of £2,000 having been subscribed for the purpose, they called a meeting of the Nobility, Gentry, Clergy,

and Freeholders, to consider the ways and means of expeditiously carrying out the plan, to be held at the Three Cranes, on September the 11th, at ten o'clock in the forenoon. At this assembly a resolution was unanimously adopted in favour of the proposal, and the meeting was adjourned to October the 8th, at twelve in the forenoon.

In the month of September, mobs of people assembled at Hinckley and Shilton, and stopped waggons laden with cheese, which they took, and distributed among themselves. These provision riots (for such they proved to be) were occasioned by the scarcity then prevalent, and the high prices by which it was necessarily accompanied. On the last day of the month Mr. Pridmore, a cheese-factor, of Market Harborough, having lodged a considerable quantity of cheese at a warehouse at the Bell, in Humberstone Gate, contrary to the advice of the magistrates, was imprudent enough (considering the state of public feeling) to attempt to remove a part of it before the fair. A waggon was accordingly loaded with it and sent off; but at the end of Humberstone Gate, leading out of the town, it was stopped by several women, who seized the fore horse by the head, while others mounted the waggon, and taking the cheese out of it gave it away among the crowd, before the local authorities had any knowledge of the proceedings. By this time the numbers of the mob had largely increased, and they went from the spot to Mr. Pridmore's warehouse in the Bell yard, into which they effected a forcible entrance, and were engaged in distributing the cheese among each other, and would soon have emptied the place of its contents, had they not been prevented by the timely arrival of the Magistrates. The whole town was now alarmed; the populace poured in from all quarters; the drums beat to arms; the guard, headed by Ensign Mortimer, were almost instantly on the spot, and fell into a square, with bayonets fixed; and in about twenty minutes were joined by the whole regiment, who formed as soon as they arrived, and soon cleared the street; but, notwithstanding all these formidable preparations, and the reading of the Riot Act, the people refused to disperse, and continued to assemble in great numbers and to show symptoms of increased defiance to the authorities. The latter, considering it might be possible to restore peace without proceeding to extremities with the populace, thought it prudent to take the cheese from the warehouse to the Exchange in the Market Place, and, to pacify the multitude, promised to supply them with the cheese the next day at 2d. per pound. It was then placed in carriages under the escort of a party of soldiers, with fixed bayonets, surrounded by a great number of the people, and safely lodged in the building already named. The mob next examined all the inns, warehouses, and other places—visited the hucksters' shops—and sought in every

direction where they imagined cheese might be deposited. Whenever any was found, it was taken away under a strong guard to the Exchange; and sentries being placed at the doors, the soldiers were dismissed. But the mob continued together, and as soon as evening came on grew more riotous than ever; stopping and searching every waggon which entered the town. The Burton stage waggon was thus treated; but between eight and nine o'clock the aspect of the popular movement became more serious—there being not fewer than 4,000 persons assembled—and at this time Sleath's Ashby waggon and Longman's Derby waggon, and two others, loaded with cheese, were laid under contribution on the Coal Hill—the populace, reckless of consequences, seizing upon everything they could plunder. Again the drums were beat to arms; confusion was on every side; lawless riot ran unchecked; the soldiers were running to the scene of action; bayonets were clashing; and flambeaux were blazing in every direction. The main guard reached the Coal Hill in time to prevent the plunder of one of the waggons, which was taken to the Exchange and there unloaded, with Longman's waggon, containing firkins of butter, which the owner reported were oysters. At eleven o'clock the mob began to separate; though some of them remained all night in the streets, waiting near the ends of the town for waggons. On Wednesday morning all were examined by the people; and at about twelve o'clock some of the cheese was sold at 2d. per lb., with the consent of the owner. Four women, who behaved with great violence to the magistrates, were taken, and committed to gaol; one of them being rescued from the constables. At nine o'clock in the evening the mob assembled in great numbers at the gaol, determined to rescue the prisoners; and with brick-bats and stones entirely destroyed every pane of glass fronting the streets. They also forced open the outer door of the gaol into the bridewell, just after the prisoners had been removed. The Mayor, Recorder, and Justices repaired to the place to put a stop to the disorder, and the guard was sent for; five of the ringleaders of the rioters being apprehended and committed to gaol. The remainder soon after dispersed. On Thursday, a Captain's Guard of 100 men was mounted, and fifteen rounds of powder and ball delivered to each man, and sentries were placed within and without the prison. The Town Crier publicly gave notice that if any attempt were made to rescue the prisoners the persons so doing would be fired upon. Quiet was thus restored, and the malcontents returned to their labours.

On Sunday, the state of affairs at Cavendish Bridge was more fearful than at Leicester; an armed conflict taking place between the guard set to keep a warehouse, who discharged grape and small shot,

and the mob, who returned the fire with muskets or fowling-pieces. On Monday, the mob at Donington had a "stand-up fight" with thirty farmers mounted on horseback, assisted by footmen; and, assailing them in front and flank at the same time, drove their antagonists to the bridge, and there routed them altogether.

On October the 8th, the meeting of the gentlemen friendly to the establishment of the Infirmary was held at the Three Cranes; when Sir Thomas Cave, Bart., was called to the chair. On this occasion certain preliminary resolutions were adopted, with a view to the immediate promotion of the success of the new undertaking. The names of those present at the meeting were:—The Right Hon. Lord Viscount Wentworth, the Hon. Mr. Shirley, Sir John Palmer, Bart., and Charles James Packe, Anthony James Keck, William Pochin, Shuckburgh Ashby, Thomas Boothby, John Hungerford, George Henry Neville, William Burleton, Joseph Cradock, Joseph Bunney, William Ayre, Thomas Pares, Joseph Chambers, William Reeve, and John North, jun., Esqrs., and Dr. Watts, and the Revs. Mr. Coulton and Mr. Simons. On the 17th of October, a meeting of the Committee was held, when a considerable addition was made to the subscriptions already promised, and resolutions were agreed upon to advance the welfare of the institution.

The successor to Mr. Chambers in the Mayoralty was Mr. Fisher, who was duly chosen Mayor on St. Matthew's Day (September 21st); though not without a spirited opposition to his nomination, as the minority against his appointment was only eleven below the majority. Mr. Fisher was one of the few remaining Jacobites who were always ready to manifest their aversion to the reigning dynasty when occasion offered. It was the invariable custom of the new-elected Mayor, previous to his election (in accordance with the requirements of the charter of James the First), to proceed to the Castle, on the Monday after Martinmas Day, there to take an oath, before the Steward of the Duchy of Lancaster, to perform well and faithfully all and every ancient custom, and so forth, according to the best of his knowledge. When Mr. Mayor and his attendants arrived at a certain place within the precincts of the Castle, the bearer of the great mace usually lowered it from its upright position, in token of acknowledgment of the superior authority of the representatives of the ancient feudal earls, within their own stronghold. This ceremony was purposely omitted when Mayor Fisher attended at the Castle Gateway; the town servant refusing to "slope the mace," as the action was designated. The Constable of the Castle, or his deputy, therefore refused admittance to the civic functionary, and he was excluded from the building. After that date, the Mayor went in private to the Castle to comply with the terms of the ancient charter.

## CHAPTER XI.

ESTABLISHMENT OF LEICESTER INFIRMARY—NAMES OF ITS ORIGINAL PROMOTERS—SELECTION OF THE SITE—MINOR OCCURRENCES—THE BATH GARDENS—PUBLIC AMUSEMENTS—ADVERTISEMENTS IN THE “JOURNAL”—VISIT OF THE KING OF DENMARK—THE BREAK-DOWN NEAR HARBOROUGH—THE RACES—THE GROUND SET OUT FOR THE INFIRMARY—OIL-LAMPS FIRST USED IN THE TOWN—NICHOLAS RICHMOND, THE MISER—THE LEICESTER FLY STOPPED BY HIGHWAYMEN—WINTER AMUSEMENTS IN 1769—THE SINGERS’ FEAST HELD BY ST. MARGARET’S CHOIR—MR. HESILRIGE’S EQUIPAGE AND PROCESSION IN 1770—JOHN WESLEY’S VISIT TO LEICESTER—THE GENERAL LIGHTING OF THE TOWN WITH OIL-LAMPS—FLOGGING IN THE LEICESTERSHIRE MILITIA—RULES PREPARED FOR THE INFIRMARY BY DR. VAUGHAN—FRAMEWORK-KNITTERS’ GRIEVANCES—OPENING OF THE INFIRMARY FOR THE RECEPTION OF PATIENTS—MR. CRADOCK’S TRAGEDY PERFORMED—DISPLAY OF FIREWORKS—AN EAGLE CAPTURED NEAR LEICESTER—MUSICAL TASTE IN THE TOWN—THE LEICESTERSHIRE MILITIA—INFIRMARY MUSICAL MEETINGS—A MOST ALARMING FIRE—ANOTHER SHERIFF’S “TURN-OUT”—THE INFIRMARY ANNIVERSARY, WITH ITS RELIGIOUS SERVICE AND CONCERT—THE SWEARING-IN OF THE MAYOR.

THE year 1767 was so much like its predecessors, in all except a few respects, that we need scarcely do more than refer to two occurrences as distinguishing it from the years preceding. The establishment of the Infirmary and the preliminary proceedings of a warmly-contested borough election constitute these more noticeable events.

On the 4th of January, the Bishop of Lincoln addressed a letter to the clergy of this county, strongly urging them to support the proposed Infirmary; and on the 21st of February appeared a list of subscriptions in the *Leicester Journal*, which may be regarded as in part a response to the episcopal appeal. It may interest the descendants of the original subscribers to read the names of their ancestors on the following roll of donors :

			£.	s.	d.
A Legacy of Mrs. Keck's will	-	-	500	0	0
Sir John Palmer, Bart.	-	-	300	0	0
Anthony James Keck, Esq.	-	-	300	0	0
Shuckburgh Ashby, Esq.	-	-	300	0	0
John Darker, Esq.	-	-	300	0	0
Charles Jennens, Esq. [Gopsall]	-	-	100	0	0
Charles James Packe, Esq.	-	-	100	0	0
William Pochin, Esq.	-	-	100	0	0
Joseph Cradock, Esq.	-	-	100	0	0
Sir Geo. Robinson, Bart.	-	-	100	0	0
Samuel Phillips, Esq.	-	-	50	0	0
The Rev. Dr. Bentley	-	-	50	0	0
Mrs. D. Ashby of Quenby	-	-	50	0	0
Thomas Peach, Esq.	-	-	30	0	0
Thomas Boothby, Esq.	-	-	20	0	0
E. W. Hartopp, Esq., by Mr. Boothby	-	-	20	0	0
Mrs. Ann Wigley, by Mr. Boothby	-	-	20	0	0
Mr. Sanderson	-	-	20	0	0
Thomas Babington, Esq.	-	-	10	10	0
Mrs. Babington	-	-	10	10	0
Rev. Mr. Gamble of Ashby	-	-	10	10	0
David Wells, Gent.	-	-	5	5	0
William Burleton, Esq.	-	-	5	5	0
Mr. John Grew	-	-	5	5	0
John Westley, Gent.	-	-	5	5	0
Harley Vaughan, Esq.	-	-	5	5	0
Mrs. Elizabeth Bewicke	-	-	5	5	0

Among those who undertook to subscribe annually twenty guineas or pounds were the Duke of Montague, the Earl of Denbigh, the Earl of Stamford, and the Earl of Huntingdon; fifteen guineas annually, Viscount Wentworth; ten guineas annually, the Countess of Denbigh, Sir Thomas Cave, Bart., Charles Jennens, Esq., Samuel Phillips, Esq., Joseph Cradock, jun., Esq., Joseph Bunney, Esq., Henry Palmer, Esq., Geo. Neville, Esq., and Mrs. Wigley; five guineas annually, Mrs. Ashby of Quenby, Thomas Phipps, gent., John Willows, gent., the Bishop of Lincoln, and Richard Garle, Esq.; three guineas annually, Joseph Cradock, Esq., Thomas Peach, Esq., Wm. Burleton, Esq., Thomas Ayre, gent., Hon. Robt. Shirley, Wm. Reeve, gent., Thomas Pares, gent., Richard Hill, gent., Henry Coleman, jun., gent., Messrs. Coltman, Moore, and Co., Richard Walker, Esq., Henry Coleman, sen., Esq., Robt. Marriot, Esq., and Miss Edwin. The subscribers for smaller amounts were—John Hungerford, Esq., Rev. Geo. Coulton, David Wells, gent., Joseph Bunney,



Esq., Thomas Babington, Esq., Mrs. Babington, Thos. Boothby, Esq., Samuel Oliver, gent., Rev. Dr. Watts, Jos. Chambers, gent., Rev. N. Simons, E. W. Hartopp, Esq., Mrs. Ann Wigley, John Ayre, gent., William Ayre, gent., Dr. Vaughan, John Fisher, gent., John Miles, gent., Robt. Peach, gent., Henry Guthridge, gent., Charles Halford, Esq., Mr. Jonathan Chettle, Miss Topp, Mrs. Newton, Robt. Bass, gent., Mr. John Barwell, Mr. Thomas Bentley, Mr. Anthony Topham, Mr. John Brewin, Mr. S. Brewin, Wm. Holmes, gent., John Westley, gent., Thomas Herrick, gent., Rev. Mr. Devonport, Rev. E. Heathcote, Arthur Hesilrige, Esq., Rev. Lewis Palmer, Chas. Barwell, gent., Rev. Dr. Hutchinson, Harley Vaughan, Esq., Rev. Mr. Gamble, Rev. James Wragge, Thomas Allen, Esq., Mrs. Eliz. Bewicke, Mr. John Gregory, Mr. William Stephens, Mr. William Mattock, Mr. Jonathan Simons, Thomas Vowe, Esq., and Mr. Matthew Reed. In July, a "Dissenting Clergyman," whose name was not made public, paid £22 2s. 6d. into the hands of Mr. Alderman Phipps, as a donation to the Infirmary. On the 17th of September, a general meeting of the subscribers was held, at which it was unanimously agreed to carry the benevolent work into execution; and in the issue of the *Journal* following the meeting builders willing to tender for the erection of a County Infirmary in a plain, strong manner, for a sum not exceeding £1,500, were invited to send in plans and estimates, either to Mr. Thomas Pares or Mr. Alderman Phipps. At a meeting held on October the 7th the plan was submitted for consideration; when it was agreed to purchase the Chapel Close for the erection thereon of the building. The site was spoken of as "a dry and airy piece of ground, situate at the south end of the town, upon the London Road leading for Wellingborough." On the 4th of December the purchase-money was paid to Mr. Walker, the owner of the ground, and immediate measures were resolved upon by the subscribers.

Of the Borough Election it is not intended here to insert the particulars; as they will more appropriately appear in a Political Section of this History; but we may state that the contest took place between Messrs. Palmer and Darker on the Tory side, and the Hon. Booth Grey (a son of Lord Stamford) and Colonel Coote, on the Liberal interest, and that a canvass lasting several weeks occasioned a furor of excitement.

The minor occurrences of the year were the robbery of Mr. Bagshaw, a Derbyshire gentleman, in Belgrave Lane, by a single highwayman, well-mounted, in the month of February; the trial in March of the rioters who plundered the cheese-waggons in the previous October, and their punishment by fine; the annual exercising

of the militia in April and May; the celebration of the king's birthday in June; the observance of the Venison Feast in August, at which the unusual number of five hundred and sixty persons were entertained; the election of Mr. Alderman Holmes to the Mayoralty on September the 21st; and the Mayor's Feast on the 16th of November, when his worship was honoured by the company of Viscount Wentworth, Sir John Palmer, Bart., John Darker, Esq., Edward Palmer, Esq., Samuel Phillips, Esq., Thomas Boothby, Esq., E. Hartopp, Esq., Hon. Robert Shirley, the Hon. and Rev. Dr. Noel, and other gentlemen.

It is also noticeable that the town was visited by a menagerie of wild beasts at May Fair, which appears to have been a novelty, and that a kind of "Vauxhall gardens" on a small scale was carried on near the West Bridge, known as the "Bath Gardens," where at the Races "Illuminations" were exhibited, with fireworks, accompanied by performances of vocal and instrumental music. Dancing began at ten o'clock—charge for admission, sixpence. The communication with the Metropolis by coaches, recently begun, had afforded facilities for the visits of all itinerant caterers for public entertainment, and had also given an impulse to the enterprise of tradesmen, whose announcements in the *Leicester Journal* necessarily increased in number. Thus, there appeared Mr. Matthew Linwood's advertisement of French, German, Spanish, and Portuguese wines—Mr. Weightman's (draper on the Cornwall) of linens, woollens, muslins, and so forth—Richard Foster's and John Mason's (rival fish-dealers) of oysters—James Mallet's of braziers and ironmongery—William Johnston's of plants and seeds—and the usual number of quack medicines promising certain remedies for all complaints, real or imaginary, possible or impossible.

It will have been perceived already by the reader, that Leicester had by this time become on a small scale and with a smaller population, essentially what it is, in its social and institutional aspects, in the present day and generation. The inhabitants did not yet number more than 10,000 or 11,000.

Early in April, 1768, the contest between Grey and Coote and Darker and Palmer ended, after sixteen days' polling, in the election of the former candidates. On the day of the declaration they were chaired in the presence of an immense number of spectators.

The local circumstance in the year most notable was the visit of a royal personage to the town, in the month of September. We learn that the King of Denmark, at that date, made a progress through this country. He went to Burleigh House, the seat of the Earl of Exeter, and on the same day dined with the Duke and Duchess of

Ancaster at Grimsthorpe, where a magnificent entertainment was provided for his majesty. On Saturday, September the 2nd, he lay at Derby. On Sunday morning, about nine o'clock, the king arrived in Leicester. The particulars, related in the *Leicester Journal*, are thus summarized :

At the hour already named, a carriage drove up to the door of the Three Cranes Inn, in Gallowtree Gate, and a traveller stepped out of it into the principal parlour of the establishment. Walking to the window, the stranger threw up the sash, showed himself, and bowed with affability and condescension to the people assembled. He was about the middle size ; he had light hair and a fair complexion. He was dressed in a light drab coat and blue waistcoat, edged with silver ; wearing on his breast a star and the ensign of the Order of the Elephant. This was the King of Denmark, the unworthy husband of George the Third's youngest sister.

Part of the Regiment of Horse Guards Blue were drawn up opposite to the Three Cranes, to receive his majesty, who called to the officer on guard, and conversed familiarly with him for several minutes.

A numerous suite accompanied the king, who were brought to the town in thirteen post-chaises and upon saddle-horses. Shortly after nine, the whole *cortege* left the inn for Market Harborough ; the royal carriage taking the precedence several minutes before the remainder. Unfortunately for the king, his carriage broke down on the road between Kibworth and Market Harborough, and the Majesty of Denmark was therefore left on the turnpike road on foot, with two companions only—the Count de Holcke, the Grand Master of his Household, and one servant. The latter, accompanied by a postillion, mounting on one of the horses detached from the carriage, immediately rode on to Harborough, to procure another carriage. In the interim, the king walked on with the Count de Holcke, hoping soon to meet with the conveyance. The Danish servant rode down into the street of Harborough, with great fury, brandishing his drawn sword, and vociferating at the top of his voice, alarming the inhabitants with his outcries in a foreign language concerning his royal master's distress ; while the post-boy, nearly breathless, interpreted, as far as he could, the servant's demands, and as soon as he was able shouted "a chaise ! a chaise ! the king on foot ! the king on foot !" All the men, women, and children, turned out of their houses on the occasion, and without delay rushed in the direction indicated, to give the king a meeting. Some of the foremost, on horseback, probably expecting to see the king fully robed, in ermine and velvet, with a crown upon his head, hurried by the middle-sized gentleman in a

plain surtout great coat (who was no other than the Scandinavian monarch), to the carriage lying on the road, where they felt certain the exalted personage would be found sitting in dignified seclusion. The object of their search (as we have seen) they had passed by, so they returned as rapidly as they had ridden to the spot; and by this time, what with the pedestrians (who perhaps having the sagacity of Falstaff, who knew "Hal by instinct," therefore at once perceived the king beneath the great coat) and what with the horsemen, in the front and the rear—his Majesty had a body guard improvised for the occasion more numerous and pressing than agreeable. Happily, the chaise was soon in attendance, and obviated all further inconvenience; his Majesty shortly after reaching Harborough, and being entertained at a cold collation in presence of the public, and then continuing his progress without further delay.

The Races, this year, on the first day, afforded excellent sport—Mr. Dighton's bay horse, Chequino, beating Mr. Stroud's Constant, Mr. Adam's bay mare, and Mr. Second's bay mare, Lovely Sally. Each evening there was a brilliant assembly, the members of the county and borough being present, besides numbers of the nobility and gentry—one lady, on the Thursday evening, wearing jewellery valued at £10,000.

In the course of the year, the Infirmary buildings were making progress to completion. On the 23rd of September, Mr. Wyatt's plan for the erection was approved of at a meeting of the subscribers, and the superintendence of the works assigned to Mr. Henderson—orders being given for carrying the plan into execution as soon as the materials could be brought together. At a general meeting of the Infirmary Committee, held on the 18th of October, it was agreed at the ensuing meeting to lay out the ground for the intended building; Mr. Henderson, the undertaker of the work, being directed to attend for that purpose. On November the 1st, the gentlemen of the Committee accordingly set out the ground, as agreed upon; and Mr. Henderson placed himself under obligations to complete the structure before May Day 1770.

As yet, the people of Leicester walked in darkness through their streets in the winter evenings, only lighted by hand-lanterns when they happened to go from home to public amusements or to visit their neighbours. In the beginning of December, the inhabitants of Gallowtree Gate had the spirit to raise a private subscription for erecting oil-lamps, at regular distances, to light up that street on the dark nights.

The decease of Mr. John Westley, during his year of office, occasioned a vacancy in the Mayoralty, which was filled up on the 13th

of February, 1769, by the election in his place of Mr. Alderman Gamble, "an eminent grocer." But the death of another inhabitant, nearly on the same day, created as much, or even more remark, than that of Mr. Westley. The person here referred to was a philosopher—whether of the school of Zeno or of Epicurus, or of both schools, it is for the learned to determine; though, in the popular designation, he was simply a "miser." He was a "Quaker," and he was known to the herd of mankind as an old bachelor of penurious habits. As, however, his history is not wholly uninteresting, an outline of it is here inserted.<sup>t</sup>

Originally brought up a framework-knitter, Nicholas Richmond worked in the frame, and during that time boarded with his father and mother. When his maternal parent died, Nicholas commenced housekeeping himself, and his father became his boarder. Their dietary was remarkably spare: a modern Board of Guardians would be ashamed to adopt it, as it consisted almost exclusively of bread, butter, and cheese, with an occasional supply of potatoes, or other cheap roots, all weighed to a scruple. Only twice a day did the Epicurean indulge his lower nature—breakfasting at nine in the morning, and dining at four in the afternoon. "Suppers," the philosopher said, "were hard to digest, particularly by persons having old constitutions." He never tasted animal food, rejecting it when offered by friends, on the ground of his natural inclinations and animal propensities requiring perpetual mortification and the exercise of habitual abstinence. A sixpenny loaf served him for eight days. It was made flat, like a cake, and was well baked, and kept a week before being weighed out for consumption. His reason for preserving his bread until quite hard was at least original, and probably philosophical, though not calculated to win converts to his system: "A crust in chewing," said this sage thinker, "excited saliva, and quenched thirst, and consequently saved the expense of beer, and the trouble of fetching it from a distance." This system he persevered in for forty years. A pint of ale and two quarts of small beer satisfied his consumption for seven days. Long experience and a small pot being his guide for his daily allowance, he would often walk nearly a mile for his pint of ale, in order to obtain it a farthing cheaper than nearer home. Once having the misfortune to break his pitcher near the ale-house door, he was observed to place his hand upon his stomach and was heard to say, "Thou must suffer for this." Doubtless, had he lived in the present day, he would have reached a higher degree in philosophy, and adopted the principles of total abstinence. When in good health, he never had a fire made in his house,

<sup>t</sup> *Leicester and Nottingham Journal*, Feb. 18, 1769.

but, preferring the warmth procured by exercise in cold weather, walked round his orchard until he was warm. The caprices of fashion Nicholas Richmond disdained to follow, as he was never observed to wear a new garment for thirty years: he thought the tailor's trade superfluous, and consequently he repaired all his clothes himself. He was a great enemy to superficial decoration, and external ornamentation, and to all kinds of luxury. When he retired to rest, he crept through an aperture just large enough to admit him, into an apartment lighted by four small panes of glass, and there reposed on a bed which no profane hand ever disturbed under pretence of arrangement; and for thirty years no person was allowed to enter this scene of his sublime meditations. The philosopher did not think wealth beneath his consideration, and therefore in the latter part of his life became a pawnbroker. He was also a house-proprietor; and being above vulgar prejudices he repaired his own houses, thus, in addition to his original calling as a stocking-maker, and his adopted one of tailor, carrying on occasionally the trades of the bricklayer and carpenter. He was neither touched with moral weakness, nor lowered by morbid sentimentality, as the following anecdote from Throsby's History will show:—"A poor woman, one of his tenants, with a numerous family, who owed him a few weeks' rent (for he collected his rents weekly), he ejected in this manner—Knocking at her door, he said to the good woman, 'I want to speak with thee; go into the entry, and take all thy children with thee, and I will go to thee.' The poor woman, not suspecting his intention, obeyed his request, which was no sooner done than he secured the door, seized her goods, and never suffered her to enter therein any more."

Nicholas Richmond, by the constant attention he paid to his own affairs, as a pawnbroker, succeeded in realizing about £4,000, which at his decease was divided among about fourteen relatives, mostly in low circumstances, who thus profited by their relative's self-denial.

It will illustrate the perils which the people of this town formerly incurred in coach-travelling if we mention an incident that happened to the "Leicester Fly," at this date. On one of the last days in March, the cumbrous vehicle had reached Holloway, when a single highwayman rode up to it, ordered the driver to stop, and demanded the passengers' money. Thrusting the muzzle of his pistol into the window, he pointed it at the breast of one of the two gentlemen inside. This person happened to be a naval officer, and therefore was less alarmed than an ordinary passenger would have been: he therefore turned aside the barrel, the contents of which were not discharged, as the pistol flashed in the pan. The officer immediately fired on

his assailant, and the other gentleman imitated his example. The highwayman was evidently wounded, as he rode off groaning, and fell from his horse. The body could not be found, though the horse was taken. Two fellows supposed to be confederates were also apprehended and taken to Highgate.

The popular place of amusement was now the "Bath Gardens," under the proprietorship of Mr. Thomas Walton, who announced his opening for Tuesday, the 16th of May, and illuminations and fireworks for every Tuesday evening during the Summer season, which was to conclude with the Races. Vocal and instrumental performances were promised, and season tickets were offered to subscribers for five shillings. At the Races, assemblies for the winter, held in the new room, Haymarket, on Tuesday in every third week, were commenced; the stewards being John Pares, Esq., and John Barrat, Esq. Tickets for twelve nights were advertised at a guinea for gentlemen and half a guinea for ladies.

In June, the Infirmary buildings were reported to be in a state of forwardness; and on the 21st of July, at the General Meeting of Subscribers (Sir Thomas Cave, Bart., in the chair), £500 was paid down to the builder on account (agreeable to the contract), on his raising the first floor. The gentlemen went down to view the building, and suggested several improvements and additions, which were effected.

The year concluded with another effort to light the streets by subscription, like that begun by the inhabitants of Gallowtree Gate; the residents of Belgrave Gate imitating the example of their neighbours. The lamps were lighted for the first time on the evening of December the 15th. In the last week of the year (on St. John's Day), the choir of St. Margaret's Church held their annual Singers' Feast at the Three Cranes. The company was numerous and "genteel," nearly one hundred persons dining together. Many pieces of music were performed by an excellent band, to the satisfaction of the whole company, among whom "cheerful concord subsisted throughout the whole evening." Proper stewards were also appointed for the year ensuing.

This was a period in which the country gentlemen drove coaches and six, and prided themselves upon their "turn-outs." The high roads being in a bad condition, such equipages were necessary; for when the Squire Westerns of the time set out from their mansions, to ride to the county town, they found the lanes full of deep ruts, in which the wheels of their cumbrous vehicles became set fast; and it was only after the squire had sworn a dozen oaths, the coachman had flogged the horses till their sides were bloody, and the horses had

tugged until they panted from exhaustion, that the family carriage was enabled to rise from the mire and proceed on its journey.

As an incident illustrative of these usages and manners of the time, we may call attention to the style of a gentleman's equipage, witnessed this year in the streets of Leicester. Charles Hesilrige, Esq., of Noseley, was High Sheriff. When he accompanied the Judge to the town, at the assizes in March 1770, he rode in a carriage drawn by six fine, high-bred chesnut horses, with bald faces, which were said to have cost 500 guineas; and attended by thirty javelin men, clad in green and buff, with buff breeches, who were preceded by a marshal, two trumpeters with silk flags (on which the family arms were blazoned), and two men with French horns, who blew a blast at the moment of the judge's arrival at the Castle. The cavalcade was closed by two servants in green out of livery, two pages, and several footmen; the whole constituting a very imposing spectacle.<sup>u</sup> On Wednesday, in the Assize Week, the Sheriff bespoke the play of *Romeo and Juliet*, at the Theatre, at which a crowded audience was present. On Thursday, the Assembly was unusually brilliant; Mr. Pares, jun., and the High Sheriff's lady opening the ball.

The Infirmary ought to have been opened in May, in pursuance of the arrangement made with the Contractor; but, instead of being ready for use at the time promised, the event was delayed until July. On the 10th of that month, a general meeting of the subscribers was held (Sir George Robinson, Bart., in the chair), when it was resolved immediately to form a Committee, to consider the most proper means to be adopted for carrying out the objects of the Institution, and preparing for the reception of patients with all possible expedition. The company went down in a body to visit the building, which was highly approved and gave general satisfaction; much to the credit of Mr. Wyatt, the architect, and Mr. Henderson, the builder. Perfect unanimity was witnessed at the meeting; the sole desire being evident on every side to promote the success of so useful and beneficial an institution.

It is on record that John Bunyan, the author of the *Pilgrim's Progress*, visited Leicester, and preached here in the reign of Charles the Second; and the tradition has been preserved<sup>v</sup> of his having lodged in a house still standing in St. Nicholas Street, nearly opposite the parish church. Another of the great religious reformers of a past age also took Leicester in his circuit of propagandism this year, and is said to have been lodged in the same building.<sup>w</sup> He was short in stature, dressed in a black garb, and long white locks flowed over

<sup>u</sup> *Leicester and Nottingham Journal*, March 17, 1770.

<sup>v</sup> See *Gardiner's Music and Friends*, p. 311.

<sup>w</sup> *Ibid.*



his shoulders. To an earnest and intelligent countenance, an aquiline nose imparted force and dignity of expression. The person here described was John Wesley. On Tuesday evening, the last day in July, this remarkable person presented himself to a large assemblage in the Castle Yard, for the first time in Leicester. The rain falling heavily before he finished his discourse, he postponed the conclusion of it until the following morning, at five o'clock, at the meeting-house in Millstone Lane—then the place of assembly used by his followers.

It has been noticed how, by the voluntary efforts of the inhabitants, the lighting of the streets by oil-lamps commenced in this town. The example of the residents of Gallowtree Gate was followed by those living in Belgrave Gate; and in August, this year, it was still more extensively imitated in different quarters; so that it was attempted to light up generally in time for the occurrence of the Races. When, therefore, the "country cousins" of the townspeople poured into the place on the 19th of September, their curiosity was gratified by seeing the new arrangements; and as the ladies and gentlemen who attended the ball in the Assembly Rooms, Haymarket, passed along the streets in sedan-chairs or carriages to that building, they were lighted by the glimmer of the oil-lamps in the principal thoroughfares. The sport was exceedingly good on the Course, and the company unusually numerous. The ball in the evening was remarkably brilliant. The ladies, enveloped in wide hooped petticoats, and wearing high-heeled shoes, and rendered still taller in appearance by the cushions on their heads (over which their hair in back and front was combed), sailed along in stately dances, accompanied by the gentlemen in their laced coats and enormous wigs, looking like modern livery servants. The Hon. Booth Grey (one of the stewards and a member for the borough) opened the dance with Mrs. Dashwood, the wife of Chas. Vere Dashwood, Esq.

In October, the Leicestershire Militia were embodied for twenty-eight days' exercise. We notice that flogging was occasionally had recourse to; two cases of this kind of punishment—one for drunkenness and another for insolence to an officer—having been witnessed in November. The amount administered was one hundred lashes.

In the last week of December, two hundred gentlemen dined together at the White Hart Inn, on the occasion of celebrating the feast of the choir of St. Margaret's. It was preceded by a gratuitous concert in the morning at the Haymarket Assembly Room. Mr. Coleman and Mr. Ross were the stewards on the occasion; and their successors were Mr. Alderman Mason and Mr. Oliver.

The year 1771 was undistinguished by local events of great importance. In the absence of such, the readers of the *Leicester*

*Journal* were provided by its conductor with some of the letters of "Junius," which occupied no inconsiderable portion of its columns.

In May, the Militia was embodied for twenty-eight days' exercise. The men were called over on Monday, the 21st, on the Corn Wall.

A meeting of the subscribers to the Infirmary was convened for Friday, the 5th of July; to make rules for the conduct of the institution, to fix the date for the reception of patients, and to define the privileges of subscribers. Before the day of meeting, Dr. Vaughan, then the principal physician in Leicester, had been requested to draw up the regulations, which he did accordingly. On the occasion, the thanks of the assembly were conveyed to him by Sir Thomas Cave, the Chairman, for the care and trouble he had taken in the task; and a similar vote was also passed to the Rev. Dr. Watts, in acknowledgment of the benefit accruing from his original plan and proposal of the establishment; he was also elected a Governor. The Duke of Montague was elected President, and the Earls of Huntingdon, Denbigh, and Stamford, and Viscount Wentworth, Vice-Presidents of the charity.

Already had the staple trade its troubles—the framework-knitters being full of complaints of ill-usage; averring that they laboured under greater hardships than any other set of manufacturers in the kingdom. They alleged that their wages had sometime before been reduced twopence in the shilling. They stated that about one stocking-maker in four could get 9s. a week by close work; out of which sum he was obliged to deduct 9d. a week frame-rent, 9d. a week for seaming, and 3d. a week for needles. In the winter, fire and candles might justly be calculated at 9d. a week in addition; so that the nett earnings of one of the better hands in the summer season was 7s. 3d.—in the winter, 6s. 6d. weekly. With this small sum they had house-rent and lodgings to pay, and provisions to purchase for themselves and families, at a period when the coarsest bread was nearly 2d. per pound and butcher's meat in proportion. The deputies from the workpeople laid their case before the hosiers; and they were then so humble that they said they were sensible of "the impropriety of interfering with matters of government," in regard to the laws regulating the prices of provisions—that must proceed from their employers. The hosiers held a meeting at the Three Cranes, at which they resolved on an answer to the framework-knitters. In this document they remind the men that in many branches of the manufacture their prices had been advanced on an average £10 per cent.; and they urge that as the great demand for Leicester goods came from foreign markets, it was the united opinion of the trade that if the price of goods sent abroad were to be increased, all would experience the injury resulting therefrom :

they must be careful not to be undersold by the many rivals they had in their branch of commerce; as they would be, were prices raised. With regard to the cost of provisions, they admitted it must affect the workpeople, and they wished it was in their power to remove the grievance, and they said they would make it a subject of their particular attention.

At last, on the 11th of September, the Infirmary was opened for the reception of patients. The day was made one of great ceremony. About half-past ten in the forenoon, the Governors waited on the Bishop of Lincoln, at the Three Cranes, and there formed a procession to St. Martin's Church. Upon their entrance a grand overture was played, and in the course of the service several selections from the Messiah were performed. The Bishop preached a sermon from Mark, c. 1, v. 34; and the Coronation Anthem, sung by the choir of St. Margaret's, concluded the musical portion of the service. The Bishop, attended by the Governors, then walked down to the Infirmary, which they opened with due solemnity; afterwards returning to an ordinary at the Three Cranes—the ladies dining at the Three Crowns. In the evening, a Grand Concert was performed in the Haymarket Assembly Room, which was under the management of Joseph Cradock, Esq., of Gumley, and the Rev. Mr. Jenner; the performers having been engaged, and the music-books lent for the occasion, by Mr. Garrick. Mr. Fisher played the violin, Mr. Fischer the hautboy, and Mr. Vernon and Mr. Bartheleman sang the songs. The collection at the church doors amounted to £139 12s. 4d., the admission tickets to £94 2s. 6d., and the concert tickets to £98 10s.; the whole sum thus realized being £332 4s. 10d. The annual subscriptions now amounted to £440, which was exclusive of the interest of the capital stock of £600 in the funds. In the treasurer's hands there was the sum of £672 12s., to which the £332 above-mentioned would be added. Among the new subscribers were William Herrick, of Frith, Esq., and Thomas Jee, Esq., each giving £3 3s. yearly, and others £2 2s.

Mr. John Cartwright was sworn into the office of Mayor on Monday, Nov. 18. He afterwards gave an entertainment at the Town Hall, at which were present Sir John Palmer, Bart., Anthony James Keck, Edward William Hartopp, Thomas Boothby, and Philip Bainbrigg, Esqs., with other gentlemen.

It rarely happens that a drama is enacted in a provincial town, the composition of a resident or author of local connection; but such was the case in 1772 in Leicester—"Zobeide," a tragedy by Joseph Cradock, Esq., being presented on the boards of the Theatre in the Haymarket. The principal performers were Mr. and Mrs. Whitfield,

Mr. Robertson, Mr. Kelly, Mr. Maddocks, and Mr. Cooke. Mrs. Monk impersonated Zobeide. In February the town was astonished by a wonderful display of fireworks, by an Italian artist, Giuseppa Rosa. Transparent paintings upon glass were also exhibited by the same person.

As one of the remarkable events of the year, we may notice the following recorded by the *Leicester Journal* of May 30 :—"There is now in the garden of Mr. Pitts Ward, hosier, of this town, a young eagle ; its wings, when expanded, measure seven feet ; the legs and talons are excessive strong ; there is a tuft of feathers on its crown, which stand quite upright, and in every particular it resembles that species of this noble bird, called the 'crowned eagle.' It was taken on Tuesday last, having been first shot at and wounded." Whether the inclemency of the season brought the bird to this locality does not appear, but the naturalist will probably be able to say what was the cause of the presence of a live eagle, in its wild state, in the County of Leicester, nearly a century ago.

It would seem that the inhabitants of Leicester manifested as great a taste for music at the date of which we are writing, as they do to-day ; the choir of St. Margaret's singing (May 31) several of the songs and choruses from the "Messiah"—"The trumpet shall sound and the dead shall be raised," "Lift up your heads, O ye gates," "I know that my Redeemer liveth," "Hallelujah, for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth,"—the whole concluding with the Coronation Anthem. Mr. Cradock, of Gumley, presented the music to the choir for the occasion. An exceedingly numerous congregation was present, and expressed the highest satisfaction with the performances.

The Leicestershire Militia were again embodied this year, and performed their twenty-eight days' exercise ; and although this was the third year of their appearance, the men almost generally answered the roll-call. On the king's birthday (June 3) the Hon. Mr. Gray, the colonel, entertained the officers at the Lion and Lamb Inn, and the captains gave two guineas a company to the privates, to drink the health of King George.

On the 18th of June the Quarterly Board Meeting of the Infirmary was held, when the Governors attended in large numbers. Lord Wentworth was called to the chair. The thanks of the meeting were voted to Joseph Cradock, Esq., of Gumley, and to the Rev. Mr. Jenner, for the essential service the hospital had received from their conduct in directing the musical performance at the opening of the institution. Sir Jno. Palmer, Bart., and the Rev. Robert Burnaby were requested to assume the management of the next musical

meeting, to take place in September. Joseph Bunney, Esq., the Treasurer, Samuel Oliver and Henry Coleman, Esqrs., Auditors, received the thanks of the Governors for their services, and were asked to continue them. The institution was now clearly in working order.

A most alarming fire broke out in the stables of Mr. Richard Barry, at the Lion and Lamb inn, which, totally burnt and destroyed three bays of buildings, and damaged two others, before it could be partially extinguished. It occurred on Monday, July 27th. Two horses fell sacrifices to the flames in the stable, where it began; but the rest were preserved. An ostler employed at the Three Crowns inn first discovered the accident, and roused Mr. Barry's family from their beds, about an hour after the fire had commenced. Owing to the speedy assistance rendered by the inhabitants and the playing of the engines, well supplied with water, upon the flames, the danger was soon over, and the injury done to the premises was proved to have been less considerable than was anticipated. The fire was attributed to the carelessness of a post-chaise driver, in leaving a candle burning against the wall of the stable.

The Sheriff's equipage and attendance at the Summer Assizes were the subject of especial remark. Amongst those who testified their respect for the Sheriff by their presence, were—the Earl of Denbigh, and his son, Lord Fielding; Viscount Wentworth, and the Hon. Mr. Noel; and Sir Thomas Cave, Sir John Palmer, Sir Charles Halford, Sir John Danvers, and Sir George Robinson, Barts., with many other gentlemen of rank and fortune. In the evening, the ball was opened by Captain Lewis and the Hon. Miss Bett Noel. The javelin men and train of servants in attendance were clothed in green and crimson, and were freeholders of Market Harborough, who, as a mark of honour to the High Sheriff (Lebbeus Humfrey, Esq.), offered their services to complete his suite.

On Thursday, September the 24th, the anniversary meeting of the opening of the Infirmary was celebrated with every demonstration of pleasure and distinction. The Governors met at the Assembly Room, Coal Hill, and thence proceeded in order to St. Margaret's Church; where the Hon. and Rev. Dr. Noel (by request) preached a sermon from the first epistle of Peter, chapter 4, verse 10: "As every man hath received of the gift, even so minister one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God." The Rev. Mr. Haines read the service; during which certain songs and choruses from the "Messiah" were performed. In the evening a grand concert was given at the Assembly Room, the principal parts in which were taken by Mr. Giardini, Mr. Cervetto, Mr. Norris, Mrs.

Weichell, Mr. Sharp, Miss Greateorex, and others. The Harpsichord Concerto by Miss Greateorex was accompanied by Giardini. Afterwards there was a ball, opened by Miss Noel and Sir George Robinson, Bart. In money received at the church doors, and in church and concert tickets, a total was forthcoming of £326 11s. 8½d. At a meeting of Governors held on the following day, the Earl of Sandwich, first Lord of the Admiralty, the Countess Dowager of Harborough, Viscount Wentworth, and many other persons of distinction were present.

After the swearing-in of the Mayor, Robert Peach, Esq., at the Castle this year, there was an old-fashioned grand entertainment at the Town Hall; when the Earl of Denbigh, the Hon Mr. Noel, the Hon. and Rev. Dr. Noel, Sir Charles Halford, and others of the county magnates honoured the banquet with their presence. The usual loyal toasts were drunk; and among them, "Prosperity and Independence to the Corporation of Leicester."

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## CHAPTER XII.

DESTRUCTION OF MACHINERY BY FRAMEWORK-KNITTERS—A RUNAWAY MARRIAGE IN LEICESTER—AN INFIRMARY ANNIVERSARY—ERECTION OF ORGANS IN ST. MARTIN'S AND ST. MARGARET'S CHURCHES—MRS. SIDDONS THE ACTRESS IN LEICESTER—THE SHRIEVALTY OF MR. WINSTANLEY—THE OLD TOWN GATES TAKEN DOWN—PRIMITIVE ASPECT OF THE TOWN—REMOVAL OF THE BEAST MARKET—A TEA-PARTY AT THE VAUXHALL—THE CELEBRATED INFIRMARY ANNIVERSARY—OMAI, THE PRINCE OF OTAHEITE—THE DEATH OF VISCOUNT WENTWORTH.

THE early grievances of the framework-knitters and the low wages they received have been before noticed. In the winter of this year, the workpeople felt all the effects of dearness of provisions, and want of employment; and, in consequence, forty-four of the principal hosiers agreed not to lower wages below the rates at which they stood at Christmas 1772, for three months after February the 27th 1773. Soured by privations, and misled by ignorant advisers, the stocking-

makers made an indefensible attack upon the rights of property in the month ensuing. > The circumstances were briefly these :\*

A frame had been constructed by an ingenious mechanic from Scotland, and offered for sale by him to several of the hosiers in this town, who were soliciting a patent for the invention. The prejudices of the workpeople were roused by reports of the powers of the new machine ; for it was said that one man upon this frame could perform as much work as sixty men could do upon a common frame, in the same time,—that, in fact, it was capable of making a dozen pairs at once ! Other reports, still more extravagant, were current—all tending to produce an impression upon the mind of the stocking-maker that the value of his labour, now lower than he could bear to contemplate, would be rendered still lower—would, indeed, be utterly destroyed.

The newly-invented frame had been set up on the premises of its owners (Messrs. Simpson and Goode), and was known to be there by the populace. To destroy the hateful machine seemed to the stockingers a certain way of preventing its introduction into the staple manufacture. In the county as well as in the town this idea was speedily ventilated ; so, on the morning of Monday, March the 12th, crowds of country workmen, leaving their village homes, thronged the roads leading to Leicester, for the avowed purpose of breaking up the new frame. About ten o'clock, they assembled in the Market Place (their numbers being swollen by additions from every nook and alley in the place), and, soon after, a football was thrown up, and then the multitude grew riotous. The interference of the authorities now becoming necessary, Robert Peach, Esq., the Mayor, very early appeared, and demanded the cause of the disturbance. One of the hosiers, who was trying to get a patent for the frame, also came out among the people, and desired to be heard. He said he understood that the cause of their meeting in that manner was the uneasiness they felt on account of the probable effects of the invention : he begged leave to assure them that the reports concerning its probable operation, of making their labour useless, were wholly untrue ; that it was calculated to serve them ; that every workman would find advantages in using it ; and that he would put his word to the test by permitting any number of them to examine it and see it work, and, if it were found to have any property tending to injure the stocking-maker, he would freely give it up to be broken in pieces ; though, he added, he was certain it would prove very much to the contrary.

For a short time, the mob was pacified by this appeal, and the

\* *Leicester Journal*, March 20, 1773.

frame was ordered immediately to be taken to the Exchange and there set up, in order that all who chose might examine its construction. However, before it was made quite ready for working, the ringleaders forced themselves into the building, seized upon the frame, removed it into the Market Place, carried it round the town in triumph, and then pulled it in pieces, throwing them among the disorderly multitude. On their return into the Market Place, the hosiers met the rioters, and then adjourned to the Exchange; where they promised the frame-breakers that they would neither seek to obtain any patents for any newly-invented stocking-frame, nor cause to be made any such machine as might occasion any reduction in the number of workmen then employed; but, on the contrary, would do all they could to prevent the realization of such a result. This assurance being signed, the stocking-makers dispersed quietly, without offering any insult to any person.

It is worthy of notice that not only did the unenlightened workpeople resist the procuring of patents for the working of the new frame, but that some of the hosiers themselves united in the unreasoning opposition to the invention.

The Press (to its credit be it said) did not join in the outcry against improvement; for the *Journal* permitted a correspondent to point out the merits and probable consequences of the adoption of the new frame. This person, writing temperately and sensibly, said the whole of the invention consisted in making a frame much simpler in construction than the common one, and capable, at the same time, of being adapted to a greater variety of work. He thus pursued his argument: "Of course it must be cheaper, less liable to be out of order, and more extensively useful than the old ones. All these are surely advantages to the workman. It would cost him less to buy a frame; and if he hires (as is generally the case) he would have less frame-rent to pay, and could make both fine and coarse work in the same frame. It is true the hosier would share part of the advantage with the workman: if the same work could be afforded vastly cheaper than at the present, the hosier would not give quite the old wages, but still the workman would gain more than before. The English merchant would be enabled to meet the foreigner on equal or superior terms, and the whole of the trade be drawn into our hands. The pretence that fewer workmen would be employed is vain; unless the English already possessed the trade of the whole world; nor even then unless new fashions in the mode of work could be no longer invented. Those who keep a number of frames of the old construction to let out may possibly be alarmed; but their fears much outgo their reason. Whoever is acquainted with the very slow progress of all



arts, must know, that in spite of the pretensions of the projectors, no new invention can be suddenly brought into use. It requires universal experience to discover and remedy all the faults of a new invention." In this way did the advocate of improved machinery strive to allay the apprehensions of its opponents; but for a long time all arguments were fruitless in this respect; as the invention was driven from Leicester to another part of the kingdom.

Bell-ringing was practised at this time with considerable zeal, a complete peal of 5040 "gransire triples" having been rung at St. Margaret's in three hours and eighteen minutes; the party having begun in the morning and proceeded half way through when one of the ropes failed.

Among the incidents of the year which furnished the gossips of the town with food for conversation was a runaway marriage, the parties to which paid a hurried visit to Leicester. On Tuesday, May the 18th, Lord Townshend, accompanied by a gentleman and several servants, came to the Cranes Inn, and remained there all that day and the day following. Lord Townshend sent expresses in different directions, and numerous were the conjectures as to the motives of his lordship's visit to Leicester. On Wednesday four post-chaises arrived at the inn, bringing several ladies and two gentlemen; one of the former being young and exceedingly beautiful. After dining at the Cranes, they all set out for the metropolis. In a day or two, the *London Evening Post* cleared up all the mystery, by making the following announcement: "Yesterday, Lord Townshend was married to Miss Montgomery. She is said to be about 17 and his lordship about 50 years of age."<sup>v</sup>

On Monday, May the 24th, the Leicestershire Militia were embodied, in order to be trained and exercised for twenty-eight days, pursuant to act of parliament.

The Races were this year signalized by good running. In the evening, the ball at the Haymarket Assembly Room was opened by Lady Craven and the Hon. Mr. Noel; on Thursday, by Miss Packe and the Hon. Mr. Booth Grey. Lord Granby (the son of the renowned Marquis of that name, and the great-grandfather of the present duke), then in his twentieth year, was present at the second day's race, dined at the ordinary, and was present at the assembly. He was spoken of as a very promising young nobleman, of great accomplishments. He died comparatively a young man, while holding the post of Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland.

<sup>v</sup> George, first Marquess and fourth Viscount Townshend, m. secondly, 19 May 1776, Anne, da. of the late Sir William Montgomery, Bart., and by her had issue four daughters and two sons. (See *Debrett's Peerage* revised by Collen, published in 1840.)

In September, the Infirmary Anniversary was celebrated with great spirit and by a large concourse of its friends and promoters. From the returns made up to the previous 18th of June, it seems 107 patients had been admitted into the House, and 106 out-patients had been recipients of the advantages of the charity. Of these 213 persons, 71 were discharged cured. On the 24th of September the Archdeacon (Bickam) preached a sermon in St. Margaret's Church, and during the service a grand band of music performed several selections from the *Messiah*. The principal performers were Mr. Giardini, Mr. Crosdill, Mr. Norris, Mr. Champness, Mr. King, and Mr. Adcock. The various collections made on this occasion amounted to £378 13s. 11½d. The company consisted of an assemblage of nobility and gentry from the different counties of Northampton, Warwick, Rutland, and Derby, as well as this county.

The church services of St. Martin's and St. Margaret's this year derived additional solemnity from the erection of organs in them by public subscriptions. The example was set by the liberality of St. Martin's parishioners. The organ was opened in St. Margaret's Church on the occasion of the Infirmary Anniversary in September.

In the winter of the year 1774 the theatrical performances in the town were under the management of Mr. Robert Chamberlain, an inhabitant. They took place on the sufferance of a local association, which had avowed its determination to enforce the laws against dramatic entertainments. Mr. Chamberlain, pleading the distressed condition of his company, had deprecated the opposition of the associators; promising only to play for six weeks after the date of his advertisement in the *Journal* of January the 15th, 1774, if they would allow him to do so. In the same paper he announced for Monday, January the 17th, the performance of the "West Indian," in which Mr. Siddons was announced to play the part of Belcour: Mr. Chamberlain himself played Varland. The actresses were Mrs. Monk, Mrs. West, Mrs. Crump, and Miss Farrell. On the 31st of January, the performances were under the patronage of Sir Charles and Lady Halford, when "As you Like It" was presented, Mr. Siddons taking Orlando on the occasion. Mrs. Siddons does not seem to have had any part in these performances. As the usual announcements do not appear regularly in the *Journal* (owing probably to the limited resources of the company), we are unable to say when the great *tragedienne* was on the boards; but the local paper of February the 19th publishes the following gratuitous announcement: "We hear that on Monday next will be performed at our Theatre, ALL FOR LOVE or THE WORLD WELL LOST, with the IRISH WIDOW; for the Benefit of Mr. and Mrs. Siddons." It is thus evident the lady took

her part occasionally in the performances; but she who was subsequently designated the "Queen of Tragedy" was now only an obscure provincial actress, in her nineteenth year, and had to pass through an ordeal of eight years of unappreciated toil in her profession, before her great powers became recognized in the metropolis.

At the Spring Assizes the rivalry among the county gentry, in their displays, when chosen to fill the shrievalty, had another manifestation. Clement Winstanley, Esq. held the office this year, and it is recorded that upwards of thirty gentlemen paid him the compliment of attending upon him, clothed in a uniform of blue, with crimson collars, white waistcoats, and white breeches. Four hundred horsemen also went out in his train. The crowds of common people assembled to witness the procession were also very great—nothing equal to them in number having been seen before, except in 1748, when Mr. Winstanley's father was High Sheriff. Both father and son were happy in the esteem of all who knew them, says the *Leicester Journal* of the day; which adds that uncommon and voluntary testimonies of regard were shown to the son by all degrees of people.

The attention of Parliament having been turned to the state of the woollen manufactures of the kingdom, Sir Thomas Cave and Sir John Palmer, the members for the county, addressed a letter to the Mayor (R. R. Drake, Esq.), requesting him to publish the heads of subjects on which information was desired, by a General Meeting of Members of Parliament and others, in "Mr. Gregory's Journal." The questions were numerous: they related to the prices, the kinds, and the quantities of wool, known to the locality—the state of the woollen manufacture—the foreign demand—the distress experienced in the district—and so forth. The Mayor convened a meeting of all inhabitants of the Town and County interested in the matter, to be held at the Three Crowns, on Monday, March the 21st; but as no account of the meeting is furnished in the *Journal*, the results of the movement are not on record.

Some inconvenience was at this time occasioned by the deficient weight of the gold coinage, which induced the principal tradesmen of Leicester to take action in the matter. Messrs. Jno. Mansfield, Thos. Lockwood, Robert Dowley, James Nutt, W. and E. Hodges, John Nichols, S. Taylor, and Wm. Lamb, accordingly advertised their willingness to take any guinea coined previous to the reign of George III. (not manifestly diminished unlawfully) that would draw in good scales 5 dwts. 3 grains, or that weighed 5 dwts. 4 grains standing weight—in short, old guineas not wanting more than a shilling, and half-guineas more than sixpence, they agreed to accept in the course

of trade; expecting that all who took cash of them would receive what they took from others.

The coincidence may be noted that in this year, in which Mrs. Siddons made her appearance in the town, John Wesley paid to it a second visit—probably less than a month after the actress's departure. Wesley preached in the "Tabernacle" in Millstone Lane, to a crowded congregation, on Thursday, March the 24th, and on the following morning, at five o'clock, he again addressed a numerous audience.

Up to this time, the four old town-gates, erected in the Middle Ages, were still standing. They were square fabrics, not unlike the Magazine which forms the entrance to the Newarke. They were probably constituted of gateways, over which pointed arches extended their curves, with paths on each side for foot-passengers. At one or other of the angles of each building rose a turret-staircase, leading to the stories above the ground-floor, and to a flat roof, on which, when need was in former times, the protectors of the place posted themselves for the defence of the town-entrances. They were also provided with portcullises to bar the entrance of intruders, and the roofs were furnished with embattled parapets and machicolations. A century before the date at which this narrative has arrived, and even until a more recent period, the only mode of entering the town was through these gates, and they were closed at a certain hour every evening; as I remember to have found, nearly thirty years ago, were the gates of the ancient city of Nuremberg, having been almost late enough to have been excluded, and left to find a lodging for the night in a suburban village. The lowness of the arches of the old town-gates prevented the ingress of waggons laden high with produce, and thus arose the necessity of finding a site close to the outside of a gate for the sale of field-produce, coal, and other articles brought for sale from the country to the town. The growth of a Hay Market near the East Gates in this town, is in this way accounted for, and the sale of corn on the town wall, which extended from the East Gates to the south-eastern angle of the Saturday Market Place, was probably required by the inability to bring the waggons laden with the grain through the gateway.

At this time, the external appearance of Leicester still retained traces of its ancient architecture. It is thus described by an inhabitant who, when a child, saw the town in its simple and early aspect: "The Church Gate was the town ditch, full of mire, with a few houses standing on the eastern bank. The houses were made of wood and plaster, not more than two stories high. The varieties of roof and gable lunging upon one another, gave the old place a

picturesque appearance. The chief street was Highcross Street, where stood the building of the Old Cross, which left scarcely room for a carriage to pass. A very enlivening feature were the trees scattered through the town. Opposite to the Borough Gaol (which was made out of St. Peter's Church) were the elm trees, two gigantic fellows, who stretched their arms completely across the street. In summer time they formed a pleasant shade, where many a pot of stout October regaled the idlers of that day. Near to King Richard's house, stood a remarkably tall holly. Its smooth silver stem, with bushy top, mounted greatly above the houses. Just below the Confrater's house, was a row of massive chesnut trees, hiding some wretched buildings.

"In the Market Place was the Pigeon Tree, under which country-women sat to sell pigeons, a great article of food brought from the open corn-fields that surrounded Leicester in all directions. Opposite the Post Office\* there was a grove of trees, under which stood the small thatched inn called the Jolly Miller. Between this and the coal-yard, at the corner of Rutland Street (now occupied by the Wellington Hotel) was a horse pond; where the porters from the Crowns and the Cranes washed their horses. All these rural features have disappeared."

The thought probably occurred to Mr. Drake, the Mayor—an auctioneer—that a public improvement and a little private business might at the same time be effected; and he therefore proposed the entire removal of the ancient fabrics. In pursuance of his recommendation, doubtless, an advertisement was inserted in the *Leicester Journal*, stating that on the 28th of March the building materials of the four gates would be sold by auction at Mr. James Bishop's, the Three Crowns Hotel, in Leicester. The East, West, North, and South Gates, were to be sold in four lots; to be removed at the buyer's expense. The *Journal* of April the 9th mentions the proceeding in this manner: "The great attention of our present Chief Magistrate, not only to the discharge of the principal duties of his office, but also to accommodating the public, and adding ornament to the town, is so remarkable, that we cannot but mention some instances to his honour. The order of Common Hall for taking down the four gates of this town, we are assured, was complied with at his particular motion, and has been executed under his immediate inspection. The East Gate has already been cleared away, and a commodious passage opened, which, when completed, we are told, will measure 54 feet wide, and the West Gate is now likewise taking

\* Mr. Gardiner here refers to the former Post Office standing on the north side of the Leicestershire Bank in Granby Street.

down. Unaccountable as it may appear to a stranger, in this improved age, yet it is a fact that Leicester, a flourishing town of trade, situated in the middle of England, had her antique gates—those monuments of Gothic barbarism!—remaining, till this very period, so narrow, that a foot-passenger meeting a carriage went in danger of his life, and so low that a high loaded waggon, or a load of hay, could not pass under them into the Market Place, or other inner parts of the town. And, what is more extraordinary, we had no other passage but upon sufferance (through one yard only) by which such loaded carriages could pass.”

One improvement often leads to another; and thus we are led to infer that the removal of the Town Gates suggested the alteration of the custom of holding the Beast Market near the East Gates to the holding of it in Horsefair Street, between the Three Crowns Hotel and the top of the street. We may be assured there would be local opposition to the proposal; but it was all useless, as Mr. Mayor's direction, publicly made known, was found sufficient to carry the measure, without recourse to private Act of Parliament or any foreign aid whatever. Here is the all-sufficient *ordonnance* under which the removal was effected :

“Leicester, July 9, 1774.

“THE BEAST MARKET, which hath been usually kept near the East Gates, in the Borough of Leicester, having been found inconvenient both to the Inhabitants and Owners of Cattle,—*It is ordered by Mr. Mayor and the Justices*, that the said BEAST MARKET be removed, and *is now removed*, and directed to be held for the future from the wall adjoining the Three Crowns Inn, and to extend straight along the Millstone Lane, in the said Borough of Leicester.

“RICHARD ROBERTS DRAKE, MAYOR.

“N.B. All persons are discharged from laying any Dirt, Rubbish, Coals, Wood, or to set any Waggon, Carts, &c., in the above-mentioned Market. Any so offending will be punished as the law directs.”

The Militia having been embodied in May, the officers gave a tea party to a large number of ladies and gentlemen at the Vauxhall, on Tuesday, the 14th of June, when the regimental band, in the pleasure-boat upon the river adjoining the garden, played a variety of tunes with pleasing effect; thus rendering the summer night melodious. On the day but one succeeding, the officers of the regiment were in their turn invited to a similar entertainment by the ladies and gentlemen. On the opposite side of the river then, there were well-wooded fields, and the noble elms around Danett's Hall; so that, to quote the local paper, “the music from the river resounding in the groves, aided by the stillness of the night, produced uncommon

harmony." In the evenings, the gardens were illuminated, and the ladies and gentlemen danced upon the green. Now, the constant din of machinery is heard on the self-same spot where the music of the dance and the joyous voices of happy merry-makers were often heard a century ago.

Unusual preparations were made to celebrate the Infirmary Anniversary in September. An announcement of the programme was made a month beforehand. The new organ in St. Martin's Church was to be opened on Wednesday, the 21st.

The anniversary was a grand day for the "dowagers," the *belles*, and the "eligible" young gentlemen of the county. Never was such an assemblage seen before in Leicester; all that was distinguished in rank, brilliant in fashion, and fascinating in beauty, being represented in the New Assembly Rooms, the Church, and the Castle. There was the popular young Marquis of Granby, in his twenty-first year, his heart probably still free, and not a few beauties anxious to captivate the future lord of Belvoir. There were the Earl and Countess of Denbigh, the Earl and Countess of Harborough, the Earl of Stamford and the Hon. Mr. Grey, the Earl of Sandwich and the Hon. Mr. Montagu, Lord Geo. Sutton and lady, Lord Dudley and Ward, the Hon. Mr. Noel, the Rev. Dr. Noel and lady, the Hon. Miss Noels, Mr. Cave and lady, the Misses Cave, Miss Dixie, the Hon. Mr. Cockayne, Lord John and Lady Palmer, Sir Harry Gough and son, Sir John, Lady, and Miss Danvers, Sir George Robinson, Lady Hewitt, and many others. Among the company also was Mr. Banks, with Omai, prince of Otaheite, who had been brought to this country by Capt. Cooke, the celebrated circumnavigator.

At ten o'clock on Wednesday morning, the company met at the New Assembly Room, Haymarket, and thence went in procession to Saint Martin's Church, where, when the company entered the venerable fabric, their arrival was announced by a grand overture, to produce which one hundred musicians contributed their skill, and with a surprising effect.<sup>a</sup> Then followed the services of the Church, in which were performed the Dettingen *Te Deum* and the *Jubilate*. The Psalms of the day were chanted, and, after prayer, a very solemn musical movement was introduced, during the pause ensuing between the prayers and the clergyman's ascending the pulpit.

The Rev. Mr. Burnaby of Greenwich preached the sermon, which, it is reported, was rational, manly, and devout; appealing to the social affections and charitable feelings of the congregation. It was heard with the closest attention; and while it touched the heart,

<sup>a</sup> See *Leicester Journal*, September 24, 1774, containing an account written by a gentleman present, and intended to be given in a private letter to a friend.

it indicated in the preacher the scholar and the gentleman. After the sermon, the Coronation Anthem dismissed the assembly.

While the assembly was passing out, plates were held at the doors by the Countess of Denbigh, assisted by the Earl and Countess of Harborough, and a large collection was the result.

The principal persons in the company then sat down to an ordinary in the Town Hall, where the tables were provided with venison by the nobility and gentry in the neighbourhood, and a choice dessert consisting of pines and a variety of fruits followed. Here, as throughout the day, Omai received the fullest share of notice, and behaved with the greatest politeness. He sat at perfect ease among the visitors, conversed with his friends familiarly, and it was said was by no means insensible to the attractions of the beauties by whom he was surrounded.

In the evening, the Castle—then open from one end to the other—was filled with an assemblage such as had never before been seen within its walls. It was in every way striking—the mingling of ranks and classes, the varieties of costume, and the unwonted display constituting a spectacle that could not fail to impress the imagination. The orchestra was placed over the part usually assigned to the crown bar—the company occupied the space usually allotted to the *nisi prius* bar. The first piece was the Ode composed by Joseph Cradock, Esq., for the occasion, and set to music by Dr. Boyce. These are the words :

“Lo! on the thorny bed of care,  
The trembling victim lies—  
Deep sunk his eye-balls with despair—  
What friendly hand his wants supplies?

“Deplore his fate to woes consign’d—  
Deplore the fate of human kind!  
Forbear to murmur at Heaven’s high decree,  
Nor swell the bulk of human misery.

“Think not in vain the pitying tear  
To thoughtless man was given,  
Sweet as the morn its dews appear—  
A balmy incense in the sight of Heaven.

“Here shall soft Charity repair,  
And break the bonds of grief,  
Down to the flinty couch of Care,  
Man to man must bring relief.

“Why lingers, then, the generous flame?  
Awake a high enraptured strain!  
Breathe louder yet—not yet refrain—  
Again repeat—and yet again!

“To hail the Work the full-voiced Choir we raise,  
And all unite to sing Jehovah’s praise.”



The effect (we are told) which this had upon the hearts of the hearers was visible in their countenances, and spoke more in its commendation than anything which could be said on the subject. There was only one drawback to the performance—Miss Davies (who had a principal part in the Ode, and two favourite songs to sing,) was taken very unwell. She, however, appeared in the orchestra, and went through the first air with difficulty, and then retired to her carriage. Signor Giardini and Mr. Norris, the former on the violin and the latter by his voice, completed the programme of the evening. Next morning, the Sacred Oratorio of Jephtha was performed in St. Martin's Church. Lord Sandwich appeared in the orchestra and played the kettle-drums, and assisted with part of his own band. Mr. Commissioner Bates sat at the organ, and there exhibited his musical abilities. Giardini led the band, and Dr. Howard had the conduct of the music. The new organ (by Snetzler) was much admired. Among the company, and standing up, was the black man, Omai, attired in his strange costume, who attracted the notice of everybody; and particularly of a boy, or child, four years of age, with rosy cheeks, bright teeth, wavy hair, and animated countenance—the son of one of the musicians, then in the orchestra, and who, in after life, remembered the scene and wrote an account of it and of himself. The child was William Gardiner.

Altogether, the receipts from all sources during the two days amounted to £819 19s. 0½d.

The death of a distinguished resident in the county took place on the last day in October. Among the few old families of Leicestershire, the Noels take a high position. Their representative at this period was Viscount Wentworth, who had married Judith, daughter of William Lamb, Esq. He succeeded his father in 1733, and in the course of these chapters his name has often appeared in connection with the establishment of the Infirmary and other public movements—in fact, he took a leading part in county affairs. The *Journal* of the date, in recording his decease, pronounces a eulogy upon his character, descriptive of the Viscount's merits as “a benevolent good man,” who bore “the pains of a tedious and distressing illness with exemplary fortitude,” and whose “chief support was built in the hopes of a happy futurity.” The Viscount was succeeded by his only son, Thomas, and left issue, besides, three daughters—Judith, Elizabeth, and Sophia Susannah.<sup>b</sup>

<sup>b</sup> The family is now represented by Lord Wentworth, the grandson of the late Lady Noel Byron, and by the male descendants of the last Viscount, who (it is believed) duly contracted a marriage on the Continent with Catherine Louisa Van Loo—a Belgian lady—but not according to the rites of the Church of England. The offspring of this

## CHAPTER XIII.

THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION—CORPORATION ADDRESS TO THE KING—RECRUITING IN LEICESTER—GENERAL WASHINGTON'S ORIGIN—SUBSCRIPTION FOR THE SOLDIERS—A SEVERE WINTER—COUNTERFEIT COIN INTRODUCED—MR. KEMBLE IN THE TOWN—A FREEMASON'S FUNERAL—COACH COMMUNICATION WITH MANCHESTER—A METEOR—A DAY OF HUMILIATION—NOTICEABLE DEATHS—EVENTS IN 1777—FRAMEWORK-KNITTERS' MOVEMENTS—MURDER OF A TOWNSMAN BY SOULES, A FRENCHMAN—EPITAPH UPON THE MURDERED MAN—THE MILITIA MARCH TO LIVERPOOL.

THE attention of the people everywhere was now turned to the state of affairs in North America, where the colonists, who had disputed the right of the British Parliament to tax them, and had therefore refused to import tea because a slight levy was imposed upon it, were arming themselves to resist the troops sent over from this country. In April 1775 the first skirmish occurred between the King's troops and the Americans at Lexington; and in June was fought the Battle of Bunker's Hill. As the year advanced the inhabitants of the large towns held meetings to address the King, condemning the American rebellion. On Friday, the 8th of September, the Mayor of Leicester (Mr. Oliver) convened a meeting of the Corporation, and proposed for their consideration the propriety of addressing the King on the state of affairs in regard to the American Colonies. The result of the meeting was the adoption of an address, in which the Corporation said: "Your Majesty's clemency and justice we are fully impressed with; and do not entertain a doubt that the Colonists will receive those terms, whenever a proper opportunity occurs, that it may be consistent with the dignity and welfare of the Mother Country to offer; and such as may be accepted with security and advantage by those who have shown a disposition to oppose with the utmost violence the Legislative Power of Great Britain; but we cannot refrain from

union was Thomas, afterwards the Rev. Thomas Noel, Rector of Kirkby Mallory, who married Catherine, the daughter of Holled Smith, Esq., of Normanton Hall, and who had issue four sons, namely, Thomas, Robert Ralph, Charles, and Edward Henry.

expressing our wishes that if their present contumacy should continue, your Majesty may adopt such measures as will convince them that the 'Sword is not borne in vain,' and that inclination, not means, has hitherto been wanting, to ensure that attachment and obedience to this country which might reasonably have been expected as the fair result of gratitude and interest. To accomplish this necessary end, and in defence of our happy Constitution, your Majesty may at all times be assured of our best assistance."

At the same time, the recruiting sergeants were active in the town; Sergeant Edmond giving notice, in the columns of the *Leicester Journal*, to "all young men of martial dispositions and a figure fit to serve the King's (or 8th) Regiment of Foot," measuring five feet six inches, and under twenty-five years of age, that if they were willing to serve His Majesty, they would meet with "extraordinary encouragement" from him (the Sergeant) on applying to him at his quarters, at the Crown and Thistle, Loseby Lane.

In the *Leicester Journal* of this period "LIBERTAS" informs the reader that the American General, Washington, was a native of Coventry, where he is said to have been born about 1709, his father having settled there early in Queen Anne's reign. His mother was niece to the celebrated General Monk, afterwards Earl of Albemarle. Several of Washington's relations were then [1775] living at Coventry; a nephew of his being a member of the Corporation there, and a friend to the re-establishment of peace on constitutional principles.

Early in December, at a meeting of the Corporation, a proposal was made by the Mayor, and unanimously agreed to, in favour of opening a subscription "towards the relief of the soldiers who are, or may be, in his Majesty's service in America, and for succouring the distressed Widows and Orphans of those brave men who have fallen or may fall in defending the Constitutional Government of the country." The Corporation headed the subscription with a contribution of fifty guineas, and Mr. Joseph Chambers and Mr. John Gregory were appointed to receive such further sums as might be offered. On the 16th of the month, £134 8s. had been raised, the names of the contributors being—Mrs. Wigley, Scraptoft, Richard Cheslyn, Esq., Langley, and Anthony James Keck, Esq., £10 10s. each; Joseph Johnson, Esq., Mayor, and Thomas Vowe, Esq., Hallaton, £5 5s. each; Mr. Alderman Oliver, £4 4s.; Mr. W. Vann, of Belgrave, Mr. Alderman Chambers, of Leicester, and Mr. Alderman Fisher, £3 3s. each; a Gentleman unknown, Mr. H. Watchorn, Mr. John Herrick, Mr. Alderman Peach, Rev. Mr. Simmons, Mr. Gregory, Rev. Mr. Kerchevall, Rev. Mr. McKinnon, Claybrook, and Mr. Tilley, £2 2s. each; and a gentleman unknown,

Mr. Holmes, Mr. Mansfield, T. W., and Mr. Bassett, Newfound Pool, £1 1s. each. Robert Haymes, Esq., of Glenn, subsequently gave £5 5s., and Mr. Oldershaw, £3 3s. All these persons were of course known as High Tories.

The winter of 1776 was uncommonly severe. A heavy fall of snow began on Saturday, January the 6th, and continued several days without intermission, rendering the cross-roads to the county town in many places quite impassable and extremely dangerous. The roads to London were closed many days against the passage of stage-coaches, waggons, and other vehicles; and the mails in consequence so delayed, that Friday night's mail from the metropolis did not arrive at the Leicester Post Office until the Tuesday night following; and business was altogether checked for some time.<sup>c</sup>

In March, a discovery was made of the introduction of counterfeit coin on an extensive scale into Leicester. A box full of bad half-pence, directed to a tradesman of the town, was unloaded from a carrier's waggon and laid before his door in the street. An investigation was instituted, when the box was found to contain counterfeit copper tied up in 5s. papers, to the nominal value of £19. No bill of parcels was enclosed, but the tradesman to whom they were addressed said if a bill of parcels came to him he would acquaint the magistrates with the matter. More than a ton weight of this base coinage, it is supposed, had been surreptitiously imported into Leicester. The Magistrates of the Borough convened a meeting of the tradesmen, at the Three Crowns, on March the 5th, to consider of the most effective means of stopping the circulation of the base coin, and gave notice of their intention of prosecuting all who might be convicted of buying or selling it—a proceeding that had become absolutely necessary, as the practice of making payments in such kind of coin had long prevailed.<sup>d</sup> On the day appointed for the meeting the tradesmen assembled in considerable numbers, and passed a resolution affirming their resolve thereafter not knowingly to receive or pay any counterfeit half-pence, and to use their utmost endeavours to stop their circulation. About one hundred and fifty manufacturers and tradesmen signed the resolution; among whom were J. Gregory, S. Coleman, J. Nichols, John Jarvis, John Brown, James Bishop, Alex. Forester, William Simpson, Edward Webb, Mears and Co., Cooper and Co., Thomas Johnson, John Eames, J. Burgess and Co., John Parsons, Coltman and Hackett, Edward Harris, E. Price, Lovell and Farmer, John Billings, J. Mansfield, Thomas Cotchett, Richard Phillips, John Slater, Thomas Berrington, John Richards, John

<sup>c</sup> *Leicester Journal*, January 20, 1776.

<sup>d</sup> See the Order of the Magistrates in the *Leicester Journal*, March 2, 1776.

Harrison, John Throsby, William Wood, J. and R. Stephens, Nicholas Throsby, and others whose names are not now generally known in this town.

At the Theatre, on the 18th of March, the "Gamester" was acted, when another of the great names in dramatic history was introduced to a Leicester audience; Mr. Kemble (a brother of Mrs. Siddons) playing Beverly. Mrs. Burden took the part of Mrs. Beverly. Mr. Kemble on subsequent occasions impersonated *Alonzo* in the "Tempest," *Barbarossa* in the play of that name, *Lovewell* in "the Clandestine Marriage," and *Orestes* in "the Distressed Mother." A correspondent of the *Leicester Journal*, in reference to his success in the part last named, says, "His figure was manly, graceful, and striking; majestic as would become the son of Agamemnon. . . . The delivery of his embassy showed him a master of declamation."

The Militia performed their annual exercise in June. On Thursday, the 13th, at five o'clock in the morning, they were assembled on parade in the Market Place, and under arms. They marched thence to Blower's Hill, near Bradgate Park, where they were drawn out to the north-east of the hill, and went through their manœuvres and firings, greatly to the satisfaction of an immense concourse of spectators. The day was afterwards occupied in a variety of entertainments; the regiment returning to Leicester at eight o'clock in the evening, in good order.

In a previous chapter, the existence of freemasonry in Leicester has been noticed.\* It appears to have extended, and to have kept up its observances in full masonic style. When a brother died, the Order attended his funeral; as in the case of Mr. Thomas Brown, worsted maker, who was buried in All Saints' Church, in the month of August, on which occasion the brethren, dressed in deep mourning, adorned with their jewels, and in uniform, formed in procession before the coffin on its way to the church. The Tyler, two Wardens, two Senior Brethren, the Master, two Past Masters, and the Secretary, all carrying the emblems of their respective offices, with the remainder of the Lodge, walked two and two according to seniority, and, followed by the Deacons with their black wands, constituted the procession. The pall was supported by six Master Masons.

No coach communication had hitherto existed with Manchester.

\* On the 7th of December, 1739, a Lodge of Freemasons was constituted in Leicester, which held its meetings at the Wheat Sheaf. It was known as No. 170. The date of the commencement of another lodge (No. 197) is recorded to have been August 21st, 1754. In the later period of the century, the names of Shirley, Noel, Keck, Fowke, and other county families, were associated with high offices held in the craft; showing it to have stood high in public estimation. *Vide* "History of the Provincial Grand Lodge of Leicestershire," by William Kelly, Esq., Provincial Grand Master (1870).

In the *Journal* of August the 24th first appears an announcement by Messrs. Barlow, Kendall, and Co., of their "Manchester and London New Diligence," which set out every morning at four o'clock (Sunday excepted), from the Blossoms Inn, Lawrence Lane, London, and from the Lower Swan Inn, Market-street Lane, Manchester, for the Swan-with-Two-Necks in Leicester, where it lay each night, arriving in London and Manchester the next evening. From Leicester the Diligence ran through Welford to Northampton. The proprietors would not undertake to be accountable for money, plate, or any other valuable article, unless entered and paid for accordingly—a precautionary notice which the constant occurrence of highway robberies at this period seems to have rendered necessary.

A very remarkable meteor was observed to fall in Leicester and this district on October the 27th. It seemed to issue from behind the moon, and was apparently much larger than that luminary. It descended to the earth with great velocity, falling to the eastward of all who watched it, and apparently not far distant. It lighted up the whole hemisphere with its brightness, and a rumbling notice accompanying it, like that preceding an earthquake, was said to have been heard by many persons.

The last local event of this year which we notice was the observance of a Day of Solemn Fast and Humiliation, for imploring the blessing of the Divine Majesty on the British arms by sea and land. The Mayor, Aldermen, and Common Council attended divine service in St. Martin's Church. The officers of the Militia, with the sergeants and drummers, were also present. A sermon was preached from the ninth verse of the 26th chapter of Isaiah, which was considered excellent and impressive. The other churches were crowded, and all ranks of people evinced becoming seriousness and the feeling which the importance and solemnity of the occasion were said to demand. The Dissenters of all denominations united in the observance of the Fast Day, by paying religious regard to it in the same way as Churchmen.

During the year several deaths were recorded, which should not be passed over unobserved. In January, Mr. Mansfield Gregory, steward to James Wigley, Esq., of Scraftoft; in June, Thomas Babington, Esq., at Rothley Temple—a "generous, humane, charitable, and honest man;" in September, Mr. John Ireland, bookseller and printer, of the Market Place—"a very honest man, much respected by friends and acquaintances;" and in September also, Mr. Alderman Ogden, aged 96, who had been chosen on the Corporation in 1719, who in his long life had scarcely known sickness or felt pain, until gored by a bull in his own pasture—were all gathered in Death's Harvest.

The year 1777 was barren in events for the local historian; for, beyond the round of municipal ceremonies and celebrations (with the nature of which the reader is already familiar), nothing seems to call for special mention. In the course of the year, the Marquis of Granby succeeded to the colonelcy of the Militia, in the room of the Hon. John Grey, who had died a short time previously. The parishioners of St. Mary, imitating the examples of those resident in St. Martin's and St. Margaret's, set up an organ (by Snetzler) in their church, in the month of June. At the conclusion of the year, Mr. Astley visited Leicester with his troop of horsemen, and astonished the inhabitants beyond precedent. About the same time, the "New Theatre" in the Vauxhall Gardens was the resort of the play-goers: the Leicester Company of Comedians performing there on various dates. Visitors were lighted to and from the place by torches.

A movement was made in 1778 by the framework-knitters, to better their condition. The first step taken was to publish in the *Leicester Journal* an address to the body, calling upon them to subscribe money towards a fund for defraying the expenses of obtaining an Act for the regulation of their business. Already, it seems, subscriptions had been forthcoming in Nottingham, Derby, Hinckley, Sheepshead, and other places. On Thursday, February the 3rd, the stockingmakers presented their petition to the House of Commons. It set forth that the petitioners had served regular apprenticeships to, and always employed themselves in, the art or business of framework-knitters, in the making of stockings, mitts, gloves, and other goods, usually made and manufactured in the stocking-frame in silk, cotton, thread, and worsted, and, notwithstanding their utmost care and industry, were not capable of providing for themselves and families the common necessities of life—not only on account of the small wages paid to them for such their work and labour, but also on account of the paying of frame-rent and other incidental charges in keeping their frames in working order; and therefore praying that leave might be given to bring in a bill to settle and regulate the wages of persons employed in the art or business of framework-knitters in such manner as to the House should seem meet. It was ordered that the petition should be referred to the consideration of a Committee, to report upon the matter; and a Committee was accordingly appointed.

At this time, the framework-knitters had an able and eloquent champion of their own class, named Charles Rozzell, who was the clerk or secretary of their local committee. He knew how to write forcibly, and he appealed to them to persevere in their endeavour to obtain legislative redress of their grievances. "If any spark of that greatness of soul which characterizes the Freeman and distinguishes

him from the Slave remains in your breasts," said Rozzell: "if you bear any reverence towards those Worthies who have laid down their lives to crush despotism and secure the inalienable privileges of their country: if you would avoid the black imputation of entailing the most abject poverty upon your offspring, by neglecting to exercise that right which nature and the constitution have given you; we conjure you, by all these weighty considerations, to persevere 'unmoved, unshaken, unseduced, unterrified,' in that honourable and necessary undertaking in which ye are embarked." The hosiers, however, were inimical to the proposed measure: one of their number (in the *Journal* of March the 7th) arguing that prices had not been lowered in the years preceding the application to parliament, and that the opening of the trade, by the abolition of the apprenticeship system, had increased the foreign demand, had brought ingenious men into connection with the manufacture, and had afforded employment to all the members of the workman's family—to his wife, and to his child, "almost as soon as it had dropped its leading-strings." A Framework-knitter answered the hosier: he said that wages bore no proportion then to what they had been, relatively to the prices of provisions and the necessaries of life, thirty years before. "Were you in the stockingmakers' situation and circumstances," he retorted, "you would be inspired by the same motives as they are, for advancing the prices of labour. But you feed on the fatted calf, while the marks of poverty are seen on their backs, and in many of them the signs of horrid famine in their countenances: they have bones and skin, it is true; but they ought not to be made fiddle-cases of, for their masters' fancies." In the month of March, a meeting of the framework-knitters was held at the Great Room in the Bath Garden, to organize the workmen, with a view to the agitation of their case; and in April the Committee of the Associated Company resolved that General Meetings of the Fraternity should be held at Leicester, Sheepshead, Hinckley, Narborough, Wigston, Ullesthorpe, Syston, and Mountsorrel, at which the "celebrated orator," Mr. Hallam, was announced as the person who was to give a full account of the proceedings adopted relative to some new regulations in a Charter to be obtained by the framework-knitters to prevent frauds and abuses, and to limit the number of apprentices to be taken by members of the fraternity. We infer that the workmen were partially successful in their movement; since in October the Committee invited their Brethren of the Town and County to be present in Leicester, on the 10th of that month; when Mr. Reynolds, clerk to the Worshipful Company of Framework-knitters, was to hold a sitting, in order to admit Brethren Framework-knitters to their freedom, under the sanction of the royal charter.



The Committee exhorted all interested in the manufacture to attend, hoping they would consider the regulation of the trade by law and rule to be as necessary as it was for the State to be so managed.

An event happened, however, in May, which engrossed public attention far more powerfully than a trade dispute or an industrial struggle—stirring the feelings of the townspeople to their lowest depths and rousing their most vindictive passions. The event to which we refer was the alleged murder of a townsman by a foreigner.

In the year previous, a Frenchman named Soulés—an officer, and a prisoner of war, on parole—came to the town, and announced himself to be a teacher of his native language, and of fencing. In his advertisements he pursued an original course of writing; deprecating national prejudices, and the suggestion that no encouragement should be given to the “natural enemies” of the country, on account of the differences between the courts of London and Versailles. Like the young men of his class and nation, he was fond of gambling and pleasure, and frequented the billiard-room at the Lion and Dolphin Inn, Market Place. On Friday, May the 15th, he played with Mr. James Fenton, and lost 6s., but was unable to pay the amount to the winner, who abused him as a defaulter; and, in consequence, angry and insulting words were freely exchanged between the two young men. Next day (Saturday) Soulés went again to the billiard-table, where Fenton was engaged in playing with another townsman, when Soulés told Fenton that the night before he had insulted him with much abuse, that he now demanded satisfaction for it, and that he (Fenton) might choose to fight him either with swords or pistols, or, otherwise, apologize for his conduct. Fenton replied that he would do neither, and continued playing for nearly two hours, until almost all the company had left the room. Soulés waited all the time, and then went up to Fenton, and said he was determined the business should be there and then settled. Fenton, however, laughed at the Frenchman; and taking up the cue which he was using, threatened to run the butt-end of it down his throat if he offered to strike; Soulés meanwhile holding up his cane in a menacing manner. Fenton then said, “Come, let me see that the pistols are fairly loaded, and pay me the 6s. you owe me, and then I do not care if I shoot one off with you.” The pistols were produced for examination; one of which Mr. T. Nedham, a bystander, unscrewed, and found loaded with powder and ball, giving the stock of it to Fenton, who ran out of the room with it, and took it to the Mayor. It was now six o’clock. Fenton’s mother was the landlady of the Green Dragon Inn (which not many years ago stood in the Market Place), and his brother John was apparently employed in the management of the business. In order

to avoid the rencontre, James Fenton went to his mother's, and while there related the particulars of his quarrel with Soulés, who had followed him there while he had been to the Mayor's with the pistol. Soulés then returned and entered the kitchen, and Fenton, in order to avoid him, slipped unperceived into the back-kitchen. Upon Soulés enquiring for James Fenton, he was told the latter had gone up into the dining-room, and thither he proceeded. Not finding his antagonist there, Soulés returned; and as he was leaving the house, John Fenton either struck him or made a lunge at him and turned him out of doors. Soulés returned to the kitchen, and was again turned out of the house by John Fenton. While standing at the kitchen-door in the street, he perceived James Fenton approach the parlour-door, which also opened into the street, and instantly went to him and said he "had an action against him for a robbery." As before, Fenton ran through the parlour-door into the yard, in order to escape from his pursuer, and there saw his brother John, to whom he said, "the Frenchman is come again." John Fenton then directly seized Soulés, and blows passed between them; and while Fenton was grappling with Soulés, the latter drew a pistol and shot Fenton through the neck; the wounded man instantly dropping to the ground. His assailant escaped without his hat, his face bespattered with blood; the cry of "murder" being raised by the people who followed him into the Market Place and through the streets. He ran to the Three Crowns, and sought refuge in a closet in one of the garrets, whence he was taken by the constables; after which, the same evening, he was committed to gaol by the Mayor. The people were so exasperated that they would have torn him limb from limb as he passed through the street, had he not been protected by the authority of the Magistrates. The bullet had entered the back of the head and passed out at the lower part of the chin of the unfortunate Fenton, and thus made a mortal wound, under which he languished till Sunday evening, when he died.

A sentiment of universal horror was created by this tragedy in the minds of the inhabitants, which was mingled with one of deep compassion for a wife suddenly made a widow, and for two children left fatherless.

At the Summer Assizes, the trial of Soulés took place in the Guildhall, on the 14th of August, when he was charged on the verdict of the coroner's inquest with the Wilful Murder of John Fenton. The evidence (of which the substance has already been stated) was fully given before Sir William Henry Ashurst, Knight, one of the Judges of the Court of King's Bench, and a jury, whose foreman was Mr. Coltman, a highly intelligent and accomplished townsman. The

prisoner wished to be tried by a jury composed of an equal number of his own countrymen and Englishmen; but this proposition was overruled. The prisoner's counsel, upon the conclusion of the case for the prosecution, moved to his lordship to have the question reserved, and left to a more solemn decision; expressing a hope that his lordship would be pleased to give directions to the jury to give a *special* verdict; observing that it must be the intent and motive which constituted the crime of murder. Soulés' notions of honour as a foreigner, argued the learned counsel, were natural; and he referred to the various proposals made by him to James Fenton, to show that Soulés was willing to abandon every kind of advantage his skill as a swordsman gave him, and therefore that there was to a certain degree an absence of malice in his proceeding. There could be no impropriety, further reasoned the counsel, in his going in search of the pistol, and there had appeared no proof of his seeking additional relief other than the recovery of his property. He did not know the deceased when he attacked him, and showed no malice to him when he had turned him (Soulés) out of the house. On the third time of his being attacked, no words followed, nor could malice prepense exist. The law did not measure acts by so nice a scale when abuse and irritation were reiterated, but made allowance for the infirmities of men in cases of passion and resentment.

The learned Judge readily consented that if the prisoner were found guilty, the verdict should be made special; and, after summing up the evidence, he proposed three questions to the consideration of the jury, as necessary to be answered before the determination of the Court of King's Bench could be obtained. 1st. Whether the jury agreed to the representation the evidence for the prosecution had given of the introductory facts at the billiard-table? 2nd. Did the prisoner fire the pistol designedly, or did it go off by accident? 3rd. Did the prisoner go to the Green Dragon only to recover his property, or with an intention to excite James Fenton to fight a duel, or to do him some mischief? The finding of the jury was that the first question must be answered in the affirmative, and that the prisoner fired off the pistol designedly; but that he went to the Green Dragon with the intention only to recover his property. The Judge, then addressing himself to the jury, said the evidence in the Record should be laid before the Court of King's Bench; together with their verdict as to the facts; and if that Court brought in the fact under the second enquiry, then the verdict of the jury would be that the prisoner was guilty of MURDER; but, if otherwise, only of Manslaughter. The trial occupied six hours.

The case excited much notice. Soulés was not content to abide

by the trial ; but before its occurrence he wrote a pamphlet, entitled, "An Appeal to Gentlemen of all Nations," and Mr. Gregory, of the *Journal Office*, published a verbatim report of the evidence in a separate form. Soulés also issued a defence of himself subsequently to the trial. The result of the appeal to the Supreme Court was their decision, made known at the next assizes, that Soulés was guilty of murder ; but a special messenger also appeared at the same time with the King's pardon.

Bitter dissatisfaction was expressed at the result ; and when the body of John Fenton was laid in the grave, on the stone recording his decease the following epitaph (from the pen of Charles Rozzell) was inscribed :—

ENQUIRING MORTAL,  
WHOE'ER THOU ART,  
PONDER HERE ON AN INCIDENT  
WHICH HIGHLY CONCERNS  
ALL THE PROGENY OF ADAM !  
NEAR THIS PLACE LIETH THE BODY OF  
JOHN FENTON,  
WHO FELL BY VIOLENCE, MAY 17, 1778,  
AND REMAINS A SAD EXAMPLE  
OF THE INCOMPETENCY  
OF JURIDICAL INSTITUTIONS  
TO PUNISH A MURDERER !  
HE LEFT, TO MOURN HIS UNTIMELY FATE,  
A MOTHER, A WIDOW, AND TWO CHILDREN.  
THESE,  
BUT NOT THESE ALONE,  
ARE GREATLY INJURED ;  
PERSONAL SECURITY  
RECEIVED A MORTAL WOUND  
WHEN VENGEANCE WAS AVERTED  
FROM HIS ASSASSIN  
BY THE SOPHISTICAL REFINERS  
OF NATIONAL JUSTICE.  
OBITU ANNO ETATIS SUI 39.

The grave-stone still stands near the south doorway of St. Martin's Church.

Soulés left the town, and it was once thought fell beneath the guillotine during the Reign of Terror in Paris ; but in 1802—twenty-four years after the date of his trial—the late Mr. William Gardiner encountered him on board ship, on his (Soulés) return to France, when Napoleon was Consul.

It remains to be recorded that in this year the Leicester Militia marched to Liverpool ; they left this town on the 10th, and reached their journey's end on the 19th of June.

## CHAPTER XIV.

FORMER DANGERS OF BIRSTALL SANDS—RETURN OF THE MILITIA FROM LIVERPOOL—THE FRAMEWORK-KNITTERS' COURT OF ASSISTANTS—A DUEL BETWEEN MILITIA OFFICERS AT PLYMOUTH—FRENCH PRISONERS IN LEICESTER—REJOICINGS FOR RODNEY'S VICTORIES—MINOR EVENTS—MR. AND MRS. KEMBLE IN THE TOWN—NEWSPAPER READING IN LEICESTER—A VOLUNTEER MOVEMENT—DUTCH PRISONERS—TOWN IMPROVEMENT—PARLIAMENTARY REFORM AGITATED—CONDEMNED BY THE CORPORATION—MOVEMENTS OF THE MILITIA—ESTABLISHMENT OF THE CROSS MARKET IN BELGRAVE GATE—THE RACES—THE COALITION MINISTRY AND EAST INDIA COMPANY—A MASQUERADE ON THE SOAR—ESTABLISHMENT OF THE REVOLUTION CLUB—MAIL-COACHES TO THE NORTH OF ENGLAND—BAPTISMS AND FUNERALS IN 1784.

THERE is considerable sameness in the record of local events of this and a few succeeding years, and those which varied the even tenor of men's lives were not such as presented interest enough to justify their lengthy notice. The *Leicester Journal* tells frequently of footpads and highwaymen stopping solitary travellers and coaches on the roads near the town; and the late Mr. William Gardiner (who was at this time a boy) relates in his *Music and Friends* (vol. 3) with what nervous apprehensions he left home on horseback before the dawn, one morning, to ride to Derby, passing on his way "Birstall Sands," formerly the "Hounslow Heath" of Leicester. "It was dark," he says, "when I set off in the morning, and by the time I had reached Belgrave it occurred to me that the road passed close to the gallows, where I had lately seen a woman hanged for murder. As it was not yet light, my spirits were fluttered at the thought of passing that place. Luckily, I perceived a light on the road before me—it was the driver of Clarke's broad-wheeled waggon, who carried a lantern in his hand. As we passed the gallows I could not help, now and then, glancing my eye towards it, expecting to see some spirit flitting through the dark firs that surrounded it. When we were clear of

this horrible place, I was about to trot off; but we were just entering the Birstall Sands—a noted spot for highwaymen—and I thought it better to submit to the snail-like pace of the waggon till we had got clear of this second danger.”

The militia returned from Liverpool in the last week of December, 1778; one hundred men, under Captain Buckby, arriving in the town before the main body, which was under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel Pochin. To the credit of the regiment, it is recorded that not a man was punished while it was absent, and none were charged with any misdemeanour requiring the intervention of a magistrate. They were welcomed home with the affectionate greetings of friends and relations, from whom they had been some months parted.

In the year 1779 an agitation among the framework-knitters, to procure legislative interference in their manufacture, absorbed the attention of the working-classes. By virtue of a royal charter a “Court of Assistants” was established, to which the stockingmakers were summoned, to be admitted to their freedoms; the Court holding its sitting at the White Hart, Coal Hill, in the month of April. The workmen complained of the existence of frauds, abuses, and the exaction of frame-rents. On the 5th of May, leave was asked to bring in a bill into the House of Commons, to redress the grievances complained of; Mr. Smith, the member for Nottingham, Mr. Coke, the member for Derby, and Sergeant Adair speaking in its favour. In the committee on the bill, Mr. Northage of London, and Mr. Goode and Mr. Rawson of this town, were examined. The measure was rejected, and disturbances took place in consequence at Nottingham, where the riot act was read. In Leicester, a disposition to create tumult was manifested on Monday evening, June the 14th; chiefly by strangers to the place—the resident workmen being peacefully disposed, and many of them distrustful of the proposed enactment. On the Tuesday morning, the Mayor swore in all the principal inhabitants as special constables, and a party of the Royal Horse Guards (Blue) was in readiness to act; but no necessity was found to call upon either constables or soldiers to interfere for the preservation of the peace.

The Leicestershire Militia marched to Bristol in May, where they were stationed till August the 21st, when they were ordered off to Plymouth; and, while there, were joined by their colonel, the Duke of Rutland. They broke up their camp in December. A tragedy occurred when the regiment lay at Plymouth, which naturally at the time produced a great sensation. One of the officers (Lieut. Brown), having spoken disrespectfully of Surgeon Pack, Ensign Burslem took

the part of the latter; and in so doing used very opprobrious language to Lieutenant Brown. This took place in the Duke of Rutland's marquee, on the 8th of October. Within two or three hours after the occurrence of the quarrel, the two officers met in an adjoining field, armed with pistols—Brown attended by Lieutenant Farmer and Burslem by Lieutenant Grundy. After firing a brace of pistols each, Burslem received a bullet in his right breast, which lodged in his body. He lingered of the wound between two and three days, and then died. A coroner's inquest was held upon the unfortunate man, when the jury returned a verdict of murder against Brown and the two seconds, who were afterwards placed upon their trial at Exeter, before Mr. Baron Perryn. A verdict of manslaughter was returned against the principal (who was fined 6s. 8d. and discharged), but the seconds were acquitted.

A number of French prisoners were brought to the town in September, from Tavistock, in Devonshire. They were principally officers of various ranks taken on board of merchantmen. The Mayor was appointed Commissary to distribute the King of England's bounty to them, and the French King's allowance. They were all on parole; but attempts were frequently made by them to escape.

If possible, there were fewer events of importance to record in 1780 than in the year preceding. The French prisoners still continued in the town, and made agreeable impressions upon the inhabitants by their light-hearted and amiable manners. They behaved well, and were very civilly treated. On the 3rd of February they left here for Dover; singing and dancing on departing from this place. They were free from boasting, temperate and even plain in living, and paid the debts they had contracted while here resident.

The Leicestershire Militia were encamped at Plymouth in June this year, and volunteers from this district had offered themselves to serve in the army; and much need had the country of their services, for England was now at war with France, Spain, and America, sixteen Russian men-of-war lying in the Channel, with numerous transports to convey stores to our enemies. Great rejoicings took place on the 15th of March, 1781, on account of Admiral Rodney's capture of the island of St. Eustatia, in the West Indies, belonging to Holland. A handsome cold collation was given at the Exchange, and a party met at the Sir Thomas White, where a transparent painting of Sir G. B. Rodney, in his naval uniform, and encircled with laurels and trophies of war, was exhibited.

A storm of thunder and lightning, which in sharp and forked flashes ran along the ground like liquid fire, and was accompanied with symptoms of an earthquake, happened on the 30th of August, in

this locality. Another natural phenomenon was observed on the day following the storm, that may be noticed in this place, not merely on account of its curious nature, but in exemplification of the village-like state of Leicester at this period. About five o'clock in the morning, an immense number of swallows assembled upon Mr. Reed's house in the Market Place, and upon the houses adjoining. "After hopping about for some time," says the *Leicester Journal*, "and forming themselves into regular order, as if regimented and under discipline, they flew off in three divisions, taking their course westward; not a single bird seeming out of place, but flying in its exact station."

The Militia returned home in November, from Roborow Downs in Devonshire, after an absence of two years and nearly six months. Crowds met them near the Dane Hills, where the companies halted for the last time before entering the town.

Towards the close of the year, Mr. and Mrs. Kemble and Miss Kemble made their appearance on the boards of the Theatre, in the Haymarket, when the former played John Moody in the "Provoked Husband," the second lady taking the part of "Lady Wronghead," and the last impersonating Lady Townley. They performed here on a few occasions in December and the January following.

The excitement created before this date by foreign news, and the war with France, had led to the establishment of news-rooms in this town; and it may serve to record the state of the arrangements for the diffusion of intelligence, if we mention that W. Simpson, of the Wheat Sheaf, Gallowtree Gate, advertised in the *Journal* of April 27, 1782, that he had two evening papers for use every day at one o'clock, besides the *Sunday Monitor* which arrived on Monday. Being clerk to the stage-coaches, he announced that he could procure the London papers twenty hours sooner than any other news-room keeper.

The Earl of Shelburne having communicated to the Lord-Lieutenant a plan for strengthening the hands of government, by raising volunteers in the different towns of the country, a meeting was held in the Castle to consider the proposal, when Sir Thomas Fowke read a proposal to the assembly; but, after some discussion, it was negatived. At the same time, the great victory of Admiral Rodney over the French fleet commanded by Count de Grasse excited great enthusiasm in the town, which was generally illuminated—pictures of the brave Admiral being placed, with devices and decorations, in many windows; and before the year was concluded, the freedom of the borough was presented to the hero of the time, accompanied by a letter from Mr. John Heyrick, the Town Clerk, which was duly acknowledged by the Admiral. As one of the incidents arising out



of the war, fifty-nine Dutch prisoners passed through the town in July. They were part of the crew of the *Hercules* and *Mars* privateers, commanded by the Huggerboomes of Flushing—the elder of whom (nicknamed “Hard-apple”) was a stout, resolute man, and was quite “lionized” by some of the inhabitants. The Mayor (T. Barwell, Esq.) gave them a dinner at the Exchange.

Town improvement was not neglected at this unpromising period of local history, as a measure now adopted proves. A row of poor, wretched huts, known as the “Cockmuck-hill houses,” had stood for a century in the middle of Belgrave Gate, a nuisance and discredit to a flourishing town like Leicester. With considerable public spirit, the parish officers of St. Margaret’s set on foot a subscription for the purpose of removing the buildings—one gentleman giving £50, and the Corporation another £50, in promotion of the object—and the result was thus obtained. Complaints were at the same time raised, that the footway leading from the town-end to the Welford Road, was impassable by pedestrians in winter; all because the “old rampart” needed repairing, and some gravel throwing upon it. Such was the condition of one of the principal approaches to the town, almost within the memory of “the oldest inhabitant.”

The winter of this year was one of unusual severity, and the distress endured by the poor very great, in consequence of the high price of provisions. A subscription was therefore opened by the Mayor and Corporation, to aid in alleviating the condition of the sufferers.

At the close of the year, the first movement for a Reform of the Parliamentary System of this country was begun in Yorkshire; certain preparatory resolutions having been adopted by gentlemen of that county, which were forwarded by the Rev. C. Wyvill to the Corporation of Leicester. The Yorkshire Reformers proposed to introduce a bill into Parliament for the abolition of fifty of the most obnoxious boroughs, but enabling the electors resident therein to vote as freeholders in the counties; to repeal the Septennial Act; and to admit proprietors of copyhold lands, with fine certain, of the yearly value of 40s., to vote for county members. The Corporation of Leicester, having received the propositions, and deliberated upon them, resolved:

“That all Committees and Associations (other than Parliamentary ones) for the purpose of altering the Constitution, to *speak favourably of them*, tend to create, *at least*, anarchy and confusion.

“That Instructions be sent to the Representatives of this Borough to strenuously oppose such propositions, if they shall be brought into the House of Commons.

“That these resolutions be printed in the public papers, and a

copy be sent to the Rev. Mr. Wyvill, to lay before the Yorkshire Committee."

These decisions of the governing body of this town, signed by Mr. John Heyrick, its Town Clerk, were accordingly sent to Yorkshire; but they did not stem the tide then fast setting in, favourable to Parliamentary Reform.

Another presentation of the freedom of the borough was made this year—in the second instance Earl Cornwallis being selected for the honour, on account of his "very gallant and meritorious services in America." The Common Hall agreed to the vote at a meeting held on the 5th of December.

Early in the year 1783 the Reform movement again came under the formal condemnation of the Corporation of Leicester, who, at a Common Hall, held on January the 17th, resolved unanimously that the Constitution of the country stood "unparalleled in excellence, owing to the equilibrium which is preserved throughout its grand component parts," and that an alteration might destroy the balance, and therefore confuse if not overturn the whole. The Corporation further deprecated the agitation of such a measure as unseasonable, as well as unnecessary and impracticable; as the Government was then braving a world in arms, and its undivided attention was required to secure a peace at once safe and honourable. The authorities accordingly agreed to send instructions to the Hon. Booth Grey and Mr. Darker, the Borough Members, strenuously to oppose "any alterations" which might be attempted to be made "in the present Representation of the People in Parliament."

The Militia (which in the year preceding had been stationed at Hull) left Scarborough for Leicester in February, marching in three divisions. Their route lay by York, Tadcaster, Doncaster, Worksop, Mansfield, Nottingham, and Loughborough, and they were fourteen days on the road. The *corps* was disembodied in the third week in March.

The barbarous practice of throwing at cocks on Shrove Tuesday, once pursued in this neighbourhood, had in 1783 been almost entirely abolished; but a stupid custom known as the "Whipping Toms," had been long observed in the Newarke. The editor of the *Journal* informs his readers, this year, that it was intended to lay it aside, and that the proper officers would exert themselves to prevent any attempts to renew it on the following Tuesday. It would seem, however, that this well-intentioned proceeding had no permanent effect; for the custom was maintained until a comparatively late period.

Among civic dignitaries, as well as higher functionaries, many vicissitudes of fortune have been recorded. An example on a small

scale is afforded in the case of a townsman who died this year. Elected an alderman in 1767 and Mayor in 1771, Mr. John Cartwright, in consequence of adverse circumstances, was glad to accept the position of mace-bearer a few years afterwards. He died on April the 27th, and was followed to the grave by the Mayor and five of the Aldermen who had passed the chair.

The reader has already been informed of changes made by the local authorities, without the aid of Acts of Parliament, in connection with fairs and markets. It appears that this year another alteration of a similar nature was carried out. It consisted in the Mayor and Justices ordering that all Beast Fairs, held usually in Millstone Lane, should not extend nearer to Gallowtree Gate than from the south-east part of the passage leading from the Market Place by the Lion and Lamb back stables to the opposite corner of the Three Crowns Inn—should continue along Millstone Lane down the South Gate to the Horse Pool, and also along the Welford Road to St. Mary's Workhouse, or across Hangman Lane, if necessary. By permission of the Magistrates, weekly meetings, on Tuesdays and Thursdays, for the convenience of the sellers of butter, eggs, poultry, and garden stuff, were encouraged; the site chosen being the open space in Belgrave Gate, where the miserable tenements already alluded to as removed, had been standing. The idea entertained was evidently, to hold poultry and vegetable markets on the spot where a great nuisance had formerly existed; and in order still further to render it conspicuous, a cross was erected. The steps were those which had formed a portion of the high cross, and the principal portion of the column was made of the old Roman milestone found near Thurmaston in 1771. James Bishop, Esq., the Mayor, suggested the plan, and the cross was erected under his direction.

Great rejoicings took place on Monday, August the 10th, to celebrate the event of the Prince of Wales (afterwards George IV.) attaining his majority. The morning was ushered in by the ringing of bells, and a grand entertainment was provided by the Mayor. In the evening a large bonfire was made in the Market Place, and several hogsheads of ale given to the populace. Earl Ferrers also invited the Corporation to an entertainment at Staunton Harold, and sent half a buck, a brace of carp, a pike, with pines, melons, and so forth, as presents to the authorities.

At the Races, in September, a contest of speed, memorable in the annals of sporting, was witnessed. The £50 plate for four-year-olds was run for by the Duke of Grafton's *Duster*, Mr. Edward's *Marcus*, and Mr. Napier's *Gamester*. The horse last named won the first heat, *Duster* the second, *Marcus* the third, and *Duster* the fourth.

The competition was so near and doubtful, almost every heat, that violent quarrels and hard blows ensued among the spectators, respecting the steward's decision. The poor horses were so exhausted that they could scarcely move from the running-ground when the race was over.

On Monday, October the 5th, Peace with America was proclaimed at the usual places in the town; but not a member of the Corporation, not a single leading inhabitant, attended the ceremony: not a bell rang in any of the church-towers, not a bonfire blazed, not a festive dinner was anywhere given, to rejoice over the return of peace; for it was one which was considered humiliating to the nation.

At the commencement of 1784, the country was in a state of great political excitement, owing to the proceedings of the "Coalition Ministry" in supporting a measure of which the object was to destroy the privileges of the East India Company, and whose policy had occasioned their dismissal. The Corporation of this town used their influence to sustain the cause of the Company and the Tory party; and with this view adopted an address to the King, at a Common Hall, held on the 19th of January, expressing their utmost satisfaction that his Majesty had been pleased to dismiss from his councils men who had attempted to enforce such arbitrary measures, and, as in duty bound, thanked his Majesty for a proper exercise of his authority on such an alarming occasion. The Corporation regarded the bill as calculated to excite a new power unknown to the country and constitution, and to form a precedent dangerous to the safety of every charter and grant within the King's dominions. The inhabitants of the town also held a separate meeting at the Exchange, when a similar address to the King was resolved on unanimously. The former address was entrusted to Mr. Hungerford, the latter to the Hon. Mr. Grey for presentation; Mr. Darker, his colleague, being too unwell to undertake the commission. Early in February, indeed, the latter-named gentleman died. In a month after, the Corporation presented Mr. Pitt with the freedom of the borough; the reason assigned being their admiration of "his firm and manly support of the Constitution, in this time of imminent danger, when daring and ambitious men would wrest from the best of kings his just right to the appointment of his own ministers." Mr. Pitt acknowledged the honour, for which he expressed his warmest thanks in a letter to the Town Clerk (Mr. John Heyrick).

The winter had been bitterly severe, the rivers being frozen all over the country. The Soar was so thoroughly set with ice that a masquerade was held upon it near the Vauxhall Gardens, on Monday, February the 2nd, when Harlequin, Columbine, Pantaloon, and Clown were

represented, and thousands of spectators assembled upon the banks and West Bridge to witness the performances. All the characters wore skates, and it was thought the affair was the first of the kind ever attempted in this country. Another aspect of the season was its effect upon the condition of the poor, who were in great distress, and who were relieved by means of a public subscription. More than £400 was raised, which was applied in disposing of bread at half price, and retailing coals at 4d. per hundred.

Of the results of the effort, the *Leicester Journal* said: "Upwards of 2,000 families have been relieved with bread and coal; and will be again relieved with bread until the whole is exhausted. The wretched cottages of distress have been everywhere searched to give their occupiers all possible help—the prisons, the hospitals, the fatherless, the widow, the needy, under every description, have also been sought for in their dwellings, to have their calamities in some degree softened, and to partake of the temporary assistance; and which, we have the pleasure to learn, has been received with humility, gratitude, and thanks to their benefactors."

In April, Charles Loraine Smith and John Macnamara, Esqrs., were elected without opposition to represent the borough. They gave a public ball in the Assembly Room, Haymarket, in celebration of the event, and Mr. and Mrs. Macnamara presented liberal donations for charitable purposes.

Although the Corporation of this town set its face against the movement in favour of Parliamentary Reform at the close of the year 1782, and at the commencement of that following, its authority was not absolute; as the friends to political progress in this town and neighbourhood proved, by forming themselves into a society, in the month of September, for the purpose of asserting their principles. They designated their society the "Revolution Club;" in reference to that great epoch in the annals of our country which is identified with the abdication and flight of the last of the Stuarts, and the accession of William Prince of Orange, by whom the Bill of Rights was granted, and in whose reign the principles of popular freedom and the rights of conscience were recognized. Clement Winstanley, Esq., was appointed the President, Edward Davie, Esq., the Treasurer, Lieut. Farmer the Chairman of the Committee, Mr. Edward Webb the Secretary, and William Knifton the Messenger of the Club. It was established for the purpose of "uniting the independent interest of the town and county of Leicester; preserving the freedom of election; and maintaining the other rights and franchises of the burgesses and others; and supporting and defending them against any oppression or invasion they might suffer from the undue exertions

of misplaced power, or the venal influence of the enemies to freedom." Fully sensible of the importance of such an institution and of the good effects which must arise therefrom, and animated by the spirit of patriotism, which venerates and seeks to preserve inviolate the "Rights of Man," the subscribers to the Rules engaged to promote the purposes of the institution to the best of their power and ability. A yearly meeting was appointed to be held on every 4th of November. Fortnightly meetings were also held, the place of meeting being the Lion and Lamb Inn. On the 4th of November, this year, general meetings of the members were held at that house and at the Bear and Swan Inn, at which Mr. Winstanley presided. Two hundred and forty members dined together, and liberal subscriptions were entered into on the occasion. The list of toasts at the dinner included the King, the Prince of Wales, the Queen and Royal Family, the Constitution, Prosperity to the Revolution Club, Absent Members, "May the Independent Electors of the Borough never want Friends to Support their Cause," and the Lord Lieutenant, Lord Stamford, Lord Huntingdon, Lord Harborough, the Members for the County, Mr. Grey, and Mr. Ashby. All was order and conviviality, and the meetings broke up peaceably.

Hitherto, no mail-coaches had commenced running from Leicester northward—those which were in use were merely stage-coaches. In order, therefore, to obtain the advantages of this mode of communication, a meeting was convened by the Mayor, to consider the propriety of sending a Requisition to the Postmaster-General on the subject, in connection with the people of Northampton, Nottingham, and Derby. The step was accordingly taken by the townsmen in the month of October. When the new mails were first put on the roads, a few months after, their arrival in the town stirred up all the curious and those who were fond of sight-seeing. As the new carriages rattled along the streets at a great speed, the discharge of fire-arms announced their approach; the coachmen and guards wearing the royal livery of scarlet and gold, and having blunderbusses thrown over their shoulders, with pistols thrust into their belts. Crowds collected round the vehicles in admiration; being fully impressed with the arms richly emblazoned on the panels, and viewing with considerable reverence the king's gaudily-attired servants. The mail from London arrived at the Post-office about nine o'clock in the morning, and the mails from Leeds and Manchester about six in the evening.

In the course of this year, the Rev. W. Bickerstaffe prepared a kind of return of the baptisms and funerals in Leicester during the year preceding. From this document, it appears that in St. Margaret's

parish, there was an increase of one only in the baptisms, and five in the burials. For the other parishes the figures stood as follows:—

			Increase in Baptisms.	Decrease in Baptisms.	Increase in Burials.	Decrease in Burials.
St. Leonard's	-	-	6	0	0	2
St. Mary's	-	-	0	4	11	0
St. Martin's	-	-	16	0	6	0
All Saints'	-	-	1	0	0	7
St. Nicholas's	-	-	0	4	0	9
The Presbytery	-	-	3	0	0	0
Other Dissenters	-	-	7	0	0	7

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## CHAPTER XV.

FORMATION OF THE NEW WALK—PROPOSED CANAL COMMUNICATION WITH THE TRENT—ESTABLISHMENT OF SUNDAY SCHOOLS—THE DUCKING-STOOL—PRIZE-FIGHTING—THE COVENTRY CRICKET MATCH—THE REVOLUTION CLUB MEETINGS—HOWARD, THE PHILANTHROPIST, IN LEICESTER—THE MILITIA TRAINING UNDER A NEW ACT—DESTRUCTION OF MR. WHETSTONE'S MACHINERY.

EIGHTY-FIVE years ago, the inhabitants of Leicester had no suburban walks, other than the ill-paved or miry roads, or the footpaths to the neighbouring villages. When ladies wished to take walking exercise, they had to encounter all the inconveniences of the undertaking; in so doing they had often (as a writer in the *Journal* said) to "scuttle through a gang of coal-teams." On festive occasions the townspeople went in chaises, sedan-chairs, and on horses to Scraftoft groves, which, by the permission of Mr. Wigley, were open to the public, and, on the fine days, crowds of visitors frequented the spot, looking with pleasure on the scenery of the Forest and in other directions, and enjoying the change from the stir of the streets to the country. But the distance was far too remote for a place of habitual resort; and therefore the Corporation resolved on providing a public promenade. For this purpose, at a Common Hall it was unanimously resolved to set apart a piece of ground, ten yards wide, from the north end of St. Mary's field next to the town to the gate opposite the turnpike

leading for London. The whole length was announced to be more than a mile, and was intended to be planted on each side with elms. The first part of the walk was designed to be a vista, seen from the Recorder's Garden (then occupying the site now covered with a warehouse and other buildings, at the upper end of Belvoir Street), and continuing to the corner of the fields opposite the windmill. The Corporation also allowed the gravel to be got from its pits to cover the walk. As the probable cost of its formation was estimated at £250, a public subscription was commenced to raise the amount; Messrs. Gregory, Mansfield, Nichols, and Cart, undertaking to receive contributions. Before the close of the year, the "Queen's Walk" (as it was at first called) was opened to the enjoyment of the public. It is now called the "New Walk," and is incorporated in the town limits.

Between the year 1760, when the first stage-coach ran through Leicester, and the year 1785, the coach communication between Leicester and other towns had greatly increased; there being evening coaches from the Three Cranes, and morning coaches from the Bell Inn, to the Bull and Mouth, and Swan-with-two-Necks, London. Besides these, coaches ran from the Cranes, daily, to Nottingham, Sheffield, and the North; to Derby, Manchester, Lancaster, Kendal, and Carlisle; and from the Bell to Derby, Buxton, and Manchester three times weekly. In addition to this mode of transport, persevering efforts were made to establish canal communication between Leicester and other places. In June, a meeting of the inhabitants was held in the Exchange, when £13,500 was subscribed towards the proposed navigation from Leicester to the Trent. Some delay was occasioned by the neglect of the appointed surveyor; but it was resolved, should he report favourably of the scheme, to call a meeting of the proprietors of land interested in it, and, with their consent, to make an application to Parliament for a bill. In the year 1737 a similar attempt had been defeated, in consequence of the narrow-minded opposition of the same class of gentlemen. Mr. Jessop was engaged on the survey in August, and in September a general meeting of the subscribers was held at the Castle, when Lord Rawdon opened the discussion by asking for information respecting the project. Charles Morris, Esq., then ably advocated its merits and advantages; Lords Rawdon and Ferrers opposing the scheme. The Earl of Denbigh was in part friendly to it, and spoke with more candour than the other peers, who declared their intention of opposing the bill in Parliament. One fact remained unanswered at the meeting, namely, that 2d. per hundred, upon an average, would be saved in the purchase of coals consumed in the town and neighbouring country; exclusive of the great saving to the public in all other



heavy goods. Another meeting was held at the Castle in October (the High Sheriff in the chair), when Mr. Heyrick, jun., made a speech of considerable length. He showed the economy in carriage and other respects to which the proposed measure would conduce, and was followed on the same side by the Earl of Harborough, Mr. Thoroton, Mr. Morris, Mr. Edwards, and Mr. Babington. A petition to Parliament in favour of the bill was accordingly adopted unanimously. In November, a second meeting was held at the Castle—Gerard Noel Edwards, Esq., in the chair—and a resolution agreed to without dissent, to forward a petition to Parliament for a General Navigation from Coleorton to Loughborough and thence to Leicester. The Earl of Harborough, Lord Rawdon, Sir John Danvers, Bart., Chas. Loraine Smith, Esq., Charles Morris, Esq., Thomas Thoroton, Esq., William Farrell Skeffington, Esq., Leonard Fosbrooke, Esq., J. F. Turner, Esq., William Reeve, jun., Esq., and many other gentlemen, were present.

The "Revolution Club" held its annual dinner in November at the Lion and Lamb, White Lion, and Bear and Swan Inns, at which Sir John Danvers, Bart., presided. Three hundred members dined on the occasion. Among the toasts drunk were these: "The Immortal Memory of William the Third," "The Cause of Civil Liberty throughout the World," "His Grace the Duke of Rutland and other absent Members."

The year 1786 was one unmarked by any event of great local importance. In connection with it, however, the death of the Mayor (Mr. Jno. Parsons) in his year of office, may be placed on record. He was a silversmith and hardwareman, much esteemed as an honest and worthy inhabitant, in his private and public capacity. His remains were interred in St. Martin's Church, to which they were conveyed by a public procession, composed of aldermen, attended by the maces covered with crape, and followed by mourners. The occurrence had few precedents: in 1658, Samuel Wanley, Esq.; in 1720, Robert Winfield, Esq.; and in 1769, John Westley, Esq., died in their years of mayoralty.

Early in May, the Leicester and Loughborough Navigation bill was introduced into the House of Commons; when Mr. Graham, the opposing counsel, set forth that the meadows lying between the two places would be injured in a very high degree, as the banks of the canal would be too low to prevent their being overflowed, and poor Sir William Gordon was pictured as likely to become a pitiable victim to the ruthless undertaking, for the water from three brooks passing through his estate would be entirely absorbed by the canal!—The bill was lost by a majority of nine.

Up to this date no Sunday Schools, either in connection with churches or chapels, were in existence in Leicester. The children of the poor were therefore left untaught on the only day when religious instruction could be imparted to them. The principal mover in the establishment of the system was H. Coleman, Esq., who was chairman of a meeting the inhabitants held on June the 14th, in the Exchange, when several resolutions were adopted, of which this was the principal:—"That the general plan of this Institution be upon the same liberal principles with those of the Society established in London for the support and encouragement of Sunday Schools; and that this charity shall extend to the children of the poor of every denomination." Churchmen and Dissenters cooperated in the work of extending the system, which from that day to the present has been sustained without intermission, and with increased usefulness. On Sunday, the 23rd of July, eleven schools were opened, and the children were conducted twice in the day to their respective places of worship. A subscription list, ultimately amounting to £133 9s., was commenced, to raise funds for defraying the necessary expenses incurred in the outset of the proceeding.

Again the Revolution Club held its annual dinner on its Anniversary day in November. Four hundred members sat down to the feast, and the usual toasts were duly honoured.

It was this year, we believe, that the Ducking-stool was made use of in this town, for the last time, as an instrument of punishment for common scolds and termagant women. The fact was related on the testimony of a person until lately a survivor, who witnessed the scene and was cognizant of the circumstances. There was then living in Redcross Street a woman whose "unruly member" made her the terror of her neighbours. She was the wife of a sergeant in the Militia. Being taken before the Justices of the Borough, charged with some offence, she behaved so violently and used her tongue so scurrilously, that the bench ordered her to be placed in the Ducking-stool. In accordance with the sentence, she was taken by the constables to the West Bridge; there fastened to a chair attached to one end of a pole passing over an upright beam; suspended, in this position over the river in the spot where the "Horse-water" formerly existed; and then let abruptly down into the depths below, amid the jeers of the spectators. The operation was repeated a few times, and after this experience the offender's violence was supposed to be cooled. The eye-witness who related the story remembered seeing the assembled crowd, and the woman raised above their heads, on her elevation in the chair after the ducking.

Prize-fighting was at this time a popular practice. Mendoza was

now in all the questionable glory of his reputation. Everywhere, the chief of the "noble art of self-defence" (as it was styled) had admirers and imitators among the humbler classes, and patrons among the sporting gentry. In Leicester, pugilistic encounters were not uncommon, and the local paper records their occurrence with all the gusto of connoisseurship. On the 22nd of May, 1787, a "set-to" took place in a field near St. Sunday's Bridge, between Loydall, the noted Whitwick collier, and Dore of this town. In order to be truthful, and to show the spirit of the age and class interested, it must be recorded by the author that the wife of one of these rude gladiators thus addressed him, when stripped ready for the combat: "D——n thy soul, lad, if thou dost not beat him, thou hadst better not come home any more." Thus encouraged, the collier entered the ring, and for fifty minutes he and Dore fought desperately; many falls occurring, and Loydell's head being beaten until, swollen and bloody, it was unrecognizable. The fortune of the day then changed; for thirty minutes more the collier fought on with bull-dog obstinacy, till, by one furious blow, he drove the Leicester champion to the ground, entirely disabled. The fight was for five guineas a side. More than five thousand people witnessed the display, and all agreed that both men "fought fair." The collier's wife, who held his clothes, won a guinea upon her husband, taking the long odds freely offered against him in the outset. When the battle was over, Jacomb (Dore's second) flung his hat in the air, and, extending his brawny fist, "challenged the whole field," but none accepted the glove thrown into the arena by so sturdy an athlete. In illustration of the rough chivalry which animated the victor, it may be added that when Dore was on crutches for a fortnight after the battle, his family being in distress at the same time, through the incapacity of its head to work, Loydell gave him a shilling out of his scanty earnings, and, when the beaten man wanted coals, unloaded his ass for him, laying the burden at his door, saying with an oath, "Thou shalt never want coals while I live."<sup>1</sup>

Foot-racing and cricketing were also at this time much in fashion, and "Nick's roughs" (as some of the parishioners of St. Nicholas were called) won laurels at Hinckley, by there defeating the players of Coventry. The bowlers were Mr. Mark Graham and Mr. C. Wilkinson, and they acquired local celebrity in consequence of this match. The Coventry players were so mortified by their defeat that they incited a party of colliers to mob the Leicester players; but when the latter approached their homes, they were met at the entrance of the town by an incredible concourse of the inhabitants, on horse and

<sup>1</sup> *Leicester Journal*, May 25, 1787.

foot, and at night some of the streets of Leicester were illuminated in honour of the victory. The Leicester cricketers received, in fact, a complete ovation on the occasion: they might have been winners in the Olympian games of classic story.

The "Revolution Club" held two meetings this year—one on June 14, when Edward Dawson, Esq., took the chair; and another on the 5th of November. On the second occasion, the stewards were Sir W. C. Farrell Skeffington, Bart., and Walter Ruding, Esq. The annual dinner took place at the Lion and Lamb, Bear and Swan, and White Swan Inns. Upwards of five hundred persons dined together, and several hogsheads of ale were distributed to the populace. The recent decease of the Duke of Rutland—one of the Club's chief patrons—depressed the convivial spirit of the members at their meeting in 1787, an effect which was thus alluded to in Rozzell's *Revolution Ode*:—

"How shall the Muse of Freedom tune her Song,  
Now Belvoir's Tow'rs are all with Cypress hung?"

On these occasions odes of his own composition were recited by Charles Rozzell, whose name has already been introduced in connection with the Framework-knitters' Committee. Rozzell was the son of Irish parents, who settled and died in Leicester. When a boy, he began to write verses, and at twelve years of age, unassisted by a master, he commenced the study of the Latin language; becoming acquainted with Horace and Virgil in a few years. He was endowed with a graceful and captivating eloquence. His *forte* lay in satire, his favourite author being Churchill, on whose style he modelled his compositions. He greatly needed prudence and temperance in association with his brilliant talent, and the temptations of festive society were more than he could withstand. He was the poet laureate of the Revolution Club, among whose members his productions elicited much applause.<sup>g</sup>

In October, Howard the Philanthropist visited the town. The officers of the Militia invited him to one of their grand entertainments; but being previously engaged to dine with Dr. Arnold, he was obliged to decline the invitation. While here, he visited the town prison, with which he found great fault, describing it as unwholesome and unsafe; and he severely condemned the custom of allowing the keeper to sell ale. He next visited the County Bridewell, which he highly commended for its neatness and cleanliness. In like manner he complimented the keeper of the County Gaol upon its cleanliness, and suggested alterations to be made

<sup>g</sup> Charles Rozzell died in the month of July, 1792, aged 36.

by the justices. He afterwards visited the Infirmary, with the management of which he found great fault, particularly with the situation of the Asylum, and pointed out some amendments he considered necessary. In the last instance, Mr. Howard's visit was productive of immediate attention to the matters complained of; the governors calling in Mr. Johnson, architect, to their assistance, and ordering various changes to be effected in the ventilation and drainage, and limewashing to be done and other improvements made, which were adopted at their meeting held on the 12th of November.

Among the portraits still preserved in the old Town Hall, is one of James Wigley, Esq., formerly of Scraftoft. He represented this borough in five successive Parliaments, and remained member until his decease in 1765. In November of 1787, his great nephew and heir-at-law, Edward Hartopp Wigley, Esq., of Little Dalby, presented the Mayor and Corporation with the picture. It was from the pencil of Highmore, who was the master of Gainsborough, and was considered to be an excellent likeness.

On Monday, October the 15th, the Militia assembled for the first time under the Act of Parliament passed a short time previously. The regiment was stated to be the best ever before raised; not one of the new men being above twenty-one years of age. Their clothing was said to be good, and the band equal to any in the service. The Duke of Rutland was Colonel; George Pochin, Esq., Lieutenant-Colonel; and — Cheselden, Esq., the Major. On Friday, November the 2nd, the officers announced a Ball and Supper to ladies and gentlemen resident in County and Town, to whom cards were forwarded; but the decease of the Colonel, at the Vice-regal Lodge, Dublin, prevented the assembly from taking place, and cards were circulated to recall the invitations. The twenty-eight days' training terminated on the 9th of November, and the delivery of arms and clothing was made as usual. The behaviour of the men was pronounced to have been attentive, and greatly laudable; not a single complaint having been heard of since their arrival; and their expertness in duty was also an object of special remark.

An event is now approaching which denotes an epoch in our local manufactures, and also indicates the intelligence of the working classes of the present age, as compared with the want of it more than eighty years ago.

Up to the year 1785 the process of spinning worsted for the Leicester trade was performed by the farmers' wives in the county, and by the domestic servants in the town (whose spare time was employed in this primitive manner to the profit of their masters), as well as by the workmen regularly engaged in the manufacture. The

whirr of the two-handed wheel was then a familiar noise at the family hearth, and in the long evenings of winter it was a busy, if not cheerful, scene. But at the date we have named, Mr. Joseph Brookhouse of Church Gate, a skilful and ingenious man, after much thought conceived that worsted might be spun by machinery. Arkwright's invention for spinning cotton in like manner was then known, but whether Mr. Brookhouse was acquainted with it or not we are unable to say; at all events, he was the first who proposed to spin worsted by machinery. As, however, he had not the requisite capital to carry out the plan, he made proposals to Mr. Joseph Whetstone of Northgate Street (grandfather of the late Joseph Whetstone, Esq.), and Mr. Coltman of St. Nicholas Street (grandfather of Mr. John Coltman, lately deceased), to enter into partnership with him; those gentlemen possessing, in addition to the requisite capital, the former a large connection as a spinner, and the latter as a manufacturer of hosiery.

It may be here necessary to add, that Mr. Whetstone was originally a native of Bulkington, in Warwickshire, where he was born about the year 1730. Being energetic and clever in business, he entered into the spinning trade when not more than twenty-one years of age; in which he was so successful that he regularly employed from 1,000 to 1,500 persons in that department of manufacture at the date of Mr. Brookhouse's discovery. Mr. Coltman was a man of high classical and antiquarian attainments, and devoted to intellectual pursuits; he had been educated at Kibworth Beauchamp, under Dr. Aikin, the father of the celebrated doctor of the same name; but his habits were those of a recluse, though, as a well-known friend to literature, he was generally visited by most persons of talent who came to Leicester. Mr. William Gardiner (from whose "Music and Friends" this estimate of Mr. Coltman's character is taken) relates that Dr. Priestley, when visiting Mr. Robert Brewin, in this town, called upon Mr. Coltman, with whom he visited and examined the Jewry Wall.

These, then, were the three men who undertook the introduction of machinery into Leicester, in connection with the spinning of worsted. Their enterprise was not destined, however, at first to succeed; for, not long after, it became generally known that worsted was about to be spun by machinery, and the workpeople, uneducated and unreflecting as they were, came to the conclusion that their labour would thereby be rendered valueless. Their feelings were also worked upon by their leaders to a high pitch of indignation, and they were taught to look upon Messrs. Coltman and Whetstone as their enemies. In fact, those gentlemen were openly threatened with loss of life and the destruction of their property, if they persisted in the prosecution

of their purpose. As party spirit was then violent and bitter, the populace were not slow to raise outcries against them also on account of their being well-known and decided Whigs and Dissenters.

In order to show the systematic way in which the workmen were allowed to organize their plan of revenge, it may be noticed that an advertisement appeared in the *Leicester Journal* of November the 30th, 1787, in which the committee of the workmen, or "worsted manufacturers," announce that a meeting of the master tradesmen had been held, at which, after thanking one of their leaders for his manly conduct in supporting "the old mode of trade in opposition to all detrimental innovations," they recommended the following mode of proceeding to those who were in any way interested in the matter:

"That they apply either to the White Lion Inn, or to Mr. P. Davies, at the Red Lion Inn, in Northgate Street, at either of which places a deputation of the committee will attend them betwixt the hours of twelve and four in the afternoon, on *Saturday*, Dec. 1, to inform them of *particulars in a manner perfectly constitutional*."

This dark hint, as may readily be supposed, was not without its effect; though, it should be added, the possessors of the machinery, in an advertisement following the foregoing in the columns of the *Journal*, made a conciliatory proposition to the workpeople. All was of no avail, as the sequel will show.

Mr. Whetstone, from his being an active principal in the undertaking, and from residing on the spot where the business was carried on, was especially singled out as the mark of popular vengeance. He applied to the borough magistrates for assistance, in anticipation of the menaced outbreak, and named the day on which it was intended it should occur; but they neglected to take any precautions, or to make any preparations for its prevention. He was then living in Northgate Street, in an old timber building of the early Elizabethan style, of which the upper story projected over the lower, thus leaving the space beneath sheltered. Having no help to expect from the local magistracy, or from any person except his own friends and workmen, he assembled a few of the latter, with his sons, on the eve of the expected riot, and resolved to defend his life and property to the last. Some of the party were armed with fowling-pieces, loaded with shot, and they were all stationed in the upper story of the house, ready for the defence of Mr. Whetstone and his property—the females of the family having been first committed to the care of friends.

At eleven o'clock on the night of Saturday, December the 1st, a few hours after the precise time at which the workmen were requested to assemble at the White Lion and Red Lion inns, a mob of drunken

and infuriated people, some furnished with torches and others with missiles, who had been for hours drinking at certain inns, gathered near the house, and commenced the assault amid hideous yellings and uproar. At first they broke all the windows with volleys of large stones. Mr. Whetstone and his companions retaliated by discharges from their fire-arms, and wounded several of the assailants. But, owing to the construction of the building the more active of the latter were enabled to shelter themselves beneath the overhanging gables, and therefore, seeing that he could not reach them, while the discharges might injure the multitude of merely idle spectators on the opposite side of the street, Mr. Whetstone discontinued the fire. The mob then obtained possession of the lower story, and destroyed all the furniture it contained. They attempted to ascend to the upper story, but failed. Fearing, though, that they might succeed, Mr. Whetstone was let down by a rope from a back-window, by one of his sons; and escaped, through the window of a summer-house in his garden, to the ground behind his premises. After obtaining a horse from a friend, he left the town in the middle of the night.

The riot had continued two hours uninterrupted by the local authorities, and Mr. Whetstone had been driven from his home, when the Mayor (Mr. Dickenson) arrived on the spot, accompanied by the Town Servants, and a few constables carrying *flambeaux*. His worship then said to the crowd, tapping some of the men on the back, "Come, my lads, give over—you've done enough—quite enough: come, give over, there's good lads, and go away." They were not disposed to take this courteous advice from the Mayor, but began to press upon him, and hustle him and his men: he therefore proceeded to read the Riot Act, and while in the act of so doing, received so serious an injury on the head from a stone, that his death ensued a few months afterwards.

Having completely sacked the premises, broken the oil-cisterns, and destroyed everything they could, the mob proceeded to Mr. Coltman's, where they broke the windows and did other damage. They also committed a similar outrage at the houses of several Dissenters who were known to be personal friends of Mr. Whetstone.

On the day following (Sunday) a meeting of the Mayor and Magistrates was held at the Exchange, when a series of resolutions was passed, pledging the authorities to commit for trial all who had been apprehended on suspicion of joining in the riot, to suppress any future attempts to injure the persons or property of the sufferers, to swear in additional constables, and so forth. These formed the subject of an advertisement in the *Journal*, which was followed by a second, in which a reward of one hundred guineas was offered to any



person who would bring to conviction the person who threw the stone at the Mayor, and of fifty guineas to any person who would bring to conviction the persons who wounded Mr. John Nedham and Mr. Smith, two of the constables; but no reward was offered for the apprehension of any of the rioters, or their leaders.

A riotous disposition was manifested among the populace a day or two after the outbreak, and a party proceeded to Market Harborough on the ensuing Wednesday, where they found a machine, which they took away from the place where it was deposited, and burnt in the Market Place. On the Friday morning they went to Melton, where they had been informed another machine was kept; and the suspected owner was so terrified by the visit that he publicly announced that he not only had no machine, but never intended to have one.

Mr. Whetstone afterwards advertised, week after week, in the *Journal*, his readiness to give a reward of £10, over and above £40 allowed by Act of Parliament, to any person who would afford him such information as would enable him to prosecute to conviction any one of the individuals concerned in breaking into and plundering his dwelling-house and warehouses. "Being conscious," he added, "that he has not deserved that ill-treatment he has met with, he is determined to bring to justice, if possible, those lawless plunderers who have so shamefully destroyed his property." The effect of these riots was well pointed out by the *Journal*, which remarked that "two of these machines are said to have been already demolished, but the *invention* is not destroyed; and from what appears at present, cannot be so easily accomplished. Violence and intemperate riot may prevent its operation, but may also *drive away the whole manufacture*, and transplant it to another place—from hence a most dangerous consequence." < The result was exactly what the *Journal* predicted—worsted-spinning was driven from Leicester for more than twenty years. The manufacture was carried on in large factories at Bromsgrove, Warwick, Bedworth, Arnold, Bristol, Kettering, Nottingham, and elsewhere; the inhabitants of Leicester meanwhile losing all the advantages which would have accrued therefrom, had it remained here during that interval. >

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## CHAPTER XVI.

AGITATION AGAINST NEGRO SLAVERY—PROPOSED CHAMBER OF COMMERCE—THE MILITIA STAFF IN 1788—THE REVOLUTION CLUB—ROZZELL'S ODE TO FREEDOM—ADDRESS TO GEORGE THE THIRD ON RECOVERING HIS SANITY—THE FRENCH REVOLUTION—FORMATION OF A CONSTITUTIONAL SOCIETY—MEETINGS OF DISSENTERS—DEMONSTRATIONS OF THE CONSTITUTIONAL SOCIETY AND THE INDEPENDENT INTEREST—REORGANIZATION OF THE REVOLUTION CLUB—LIST OF ITS MEMBERS.

ABOUT this period the agitation for the overthrow of the negro-slavery system was initiated in this locality. A subscription had been commenced in promotion of an application to parliament for abolishing the slave trade, which was liberally encouraged, and a requisition was forwarded to the High Sheriff of the County, soliciting him to call a general meeting for the purpose of petitioning the House of Commons that effectual measures might be adopted to bring about the desired result. The names of the requisitionists were C. Winstanley, T. Babington, E. Hartopp Wigley, E. Cradock Hartopp, R. Marriott, T. Dicey, M. Babington, H. Coleman, T. Greaves, and S. Hunt. The meeting was held at the Castle, on the 7th of February, 1788, when Jos. Cradock, Esq., was called to the chair, and resolutions condemnatory of the slave trade, and calling for the adoption of remedies, were unanimously adopted. The petition received about five hundred signatures. The clergy of the county also met, with the Archdeacon at their head, and adopted an anti-slavery petition.

It seems somewhat strange to modern thinking (which is apt to infer that seventy or eighty years ago the inhabitants were in a very backward condition) that the *Leicester Journal* called for the establishment of a Chamber of Commerce in the year 1788, in these sentences: "It has been long a matter of surprise that a Chamber of Commerce has not been erected in this place—a circumstance highly necessary in a large and flourishing manufacturing town. The single event of the present alteration of *Spinning of Wool by Machines* may have an effect of transporting the manufactory entirely from hence:—its tendency should therefore be well considered and in due

time." Nearly at the same date the formation of an Agricultural Society for the county, under the presidency of Lord Rawdon, was announced. Among the subscribers were Lords Huntingdon, Harborough, Winchelsea, Gainsborough, and Rawdon, and Sir John Palmer, Col. Hastings, and Messrs. Abney, Bakewell, Buckley, Burgess, R. Carver, R. Cresswell, John Cave Brown, Joshua Grundy, T. Paget, W Pochin, T. Pares, T. Pares, jun., C. Winstanley, Dr. Kirkland, Rev. W. Gresley, and others. The first meeting was held on April the 2nd; on which occasion subscriptions were entered into of one guinea each, and Mr. Mansfield's bank was appointed to be the place for payment.

The Militia were called out on Monday, the 5th of May. On the 27th they were reviewed by their colonel in presence of a large concourse of people. Their appearance and expertness were pronounced unexceptionable, and not a single complaint against any of the men was lodged during the period of training. The following is a list of the corps of officers:

Geo. Pochin, Esq., Colonel.  
Charles James Packe, Esq., Lieut.-Colonel.  
Edward Cheselden, Major.

## CAPTAINS.

John S. Brown, Esq.	Sir Thos. Cave, Bart.
John Dodd, Esq.	James Phelp, Esq.
Thos. B. Parkyns, Esq.	Jos. Farmer, Esq., by brevet.

## CAPT. LIEUT.

Nat. Cooper, gent.

## LIEUTENANTS.

Robert Farrer, gent.	Robert Hall, gent.
Joshua Grundy, gent.	Wm. Melland, gent.
Chas. E. White, gent.	Thomas Freer, gent.
Rd. Turner, gent.	

## ENSIGNS.

Richard Tatham, gent.	Chas. Davie, gent.
T. B. Sleath, gent.	Nat. Burslem, gent.
John Cooper, gent.	
Joseph Farmer, Esq., <i>Adjutant</i> .	T. Freer, gent., <i>Surgeon</i> .

This year the Revolution Club made an unusual demonstration, which they called a "Jubilee," to celebrate the hundredth anniversary of the memorable landing of William, Prince of Orange, "who preserved the liberties of this country, and secured a free constitution to every Briton." At the dinner (held at the Lion and Lamb, White

Swan, and Bear and Swan inns) 672 persons feasted. The names of the principal persons were:—Sir Geo. Robinson, Bart., in the chair, Sir John Danvers, Bart., Sir Wm. F. Skeffington, Bart., William Pochin, Esq., M.P., Col. Pochin, Lieut.-Col. Packe, Major Cheselden, Clement Winstanley, Esq., Willoughby Dixie, Esq., Edmund Cradock Hartopp, Esq., Walter Ruding, Esq., Henry Coleman, Esq., Ed. Davie, Esq., Thomas Pares, Esq., John Pares, Esq., Dr. Hamilton Kelso, Dr. Arnold, Dr. Bree, and many others. The usual toasts were given and duly honoured, including the “glorious and immortal memory of William the Third,” “The Friends of Civil Liberty throughout the World,” “The Cause for which Sidney bled on the scaffold and Hampden in the field,” “The Houses of Stamford, Devonshire, and Harborough,” and so forth; and Colonel Pochin read a resolution adopted by the Committee, “that it is the opinion of this meeting that this town is improperly represented in Parliament,” and informed the meeting that a gentleman, a member of the club, would offer himself as a candidate on the occasion of the occurrence of a vacancy in the representation—an announcement received with an outburst of applause. The following ode, written by Charles Rozzell, was recited on the occasion:—

“ Old Time has with unerring hand  
 A hundred times revolv'd his wheel  
 Since Albion's highly-favour'd land  
 Did freedom's genial influence feel:  
 And as the time-describing god  
 The azure vaulted system trod,  
 With trumpet of ætherial make  
 He thus proclaim'd to ev'ry passing sphere;  
     ‘ The next to Venus from the sun,  
     Behold a radiant planet run;  
     Within this orb an isle is found,  
     Envy'd by all the nations round,  
     For liberty has rear'd her temple there.’

“ Let passive bigots ask how freedom reigns,  
 Or where the place that gave her birth:—  
 'Twas heav'n!—the blessings which she deigns  
 Belong to all the sons of earth.  
 What tho' the tyrant and the priest  
 By fraud enslav'd the hapless East,  
 When on the banks where Tygris flows  
 Nimrod the first of despots rose,  
 Still liberty inherent is in all!  
     O ! Albion 'twas thy better fate  
     This glorious truth to prove tho' late;  
     When, by collected fire and might,  
     Thy sons asserted nat'ral right,  
 With blood cementing what shall never fall.

" Let tyrants causeless war provoke,  
 And deluge half the world in blood;  
 Let vassals smart beneath the stroke,  
 And tamely think it public good:  
 Britannia can a sovereign boast,  
 Belov'd, obey'd, but not from dread,  
 Who, when the god of war, his host  
 Calls out, sees freedom's legions led.  
 And O, historians! as you're free, be bold,  
 Impress the æra with a type of gold;  
 When reason scorning threats of power  
 Took courage with a guiding hand,  
 And in a dark tremendous hour,  
 From vilest slavery sav'd the land;  
 Rethron'd fair liberty by gen'ral choice,  
 And guaranteed her by a people's voice.

## CHORUS.

" Then let this choral throng  
 To heaven's high arches raise the song,  
 And whilst we pity nations round,  
 Fast in the chains of slav'ry bound,  
 Let ev'ry Briton teach his son,  
 What his great sires for him have done,  
 And show his progeny that all their blood,  
 Is nobly spilt, if spilt for PUBLIC GOOD."

A kind of counter-demonstration to the Jubilee, it may be assumed, was the Mayor's Feast, held in November; when Henry Watchorn, Esq., gave a grand entertainment, served up in two courses. The king had by this time become afflicted with symptoms of insanity, which occasioned this toast from the chair: "A speedy re-establishment of the health of our beloved Sovereign." When "God save the King" was sung, every voice joined in the strain, and re-echoed its prayer with energetic feeling.

Forty years after the Jacobite rebellion, politics had insensibly undergone a great change. The Jacobites in that interval had become Tories, and Pitt was now their idol. In Leicester, they began the year 1789 (through their leaders on the Corporation) by resolving that the thanks of that body be given to the Right Hon. William Pitt, Chancellor of the Exchequer, and to the Borough and County Members, for their support of "the important right of the Lords and Commons of this Realm to provide the means of supplying the defect of the personal exercise of the Royal authority, arising from his Majesty's indisposition." The King had become insane, and the Tories wished to confer the Royal authority on the Prince Regent, while the Whigs were desirous of postponing the measure, in the hope of the King's early recovery. In April, however, George had so

far recovered that addresses were forwarded to him and his Queen, congratulating them on the King's restoration to health.

The annual exercising of the militia took place in June, under the command of Col. Pochin. The Rev. Henry Woodcock, of Barkby, was appointed the chaplain of the regiment.

In the same month also, the Worshipful Master, Wardens, and Brethren of Lodge No. 91 of Freemasons resident in Leicester, held a meeting on St. John's Day, and walked in procession from the Pelican in Gallowtree Gate to St. Martin's Church, where a sermon was preached for their benefit. After divine service, they went in procession to Brother Joseph Smith's, the Crown and Thistle, in Loseby Lane, where they dined and the greatest harmony prevailed, enlivened by toasts of the craft, suitable to the occasion.

But while the townsmen of Leicester were conversing only about the militia muster or the last freemasons' dinner, events of surpassing interest were transpiring across the Channel. In July, forty thousand people of Paris rose in arms, and a day or two after captured the Bastille, beheading its Governor and the Archbishop of Paris, and carrying their heads on poles through the thoroughfares; the House of Representatives thereupon declaring itself the National Assembly, and the Revolution being fully inaugurated. These events were followed in October by an unfortunate incident at Versailles, on the occasion of a public banquet, when the troops trampled underfoot the tricoloured cockade and replaced it with a white one; and the populace, fierce with hunger and infuriated with resentment, acquired the mastery in the French capital.

The startling news of these proceedings reached this town but slowly; yet the Conservatives of Leicester soon bestirred themselves in the formation of a "Constitutional Society," whose beacon-light was Mr. Pitt. They held a first meeting late in October, and a second on the 9th of November. At the latter they adopted a number of resolutions, and appointed Messrs. Boulton and Mansfield their treasurers. Their object was obviously to counteract the efforts of the Revolution Club, who, undeterred by the appearance of affairs in France, held their customary anniversary meeting on Wednesday, November the 4th, at the Lion and Lamb, the White Swan, and Bear and Swan inns—the stewards being E. C. Hartopp, Esq., and Lieut. Col. Packe: in addition to whom many gentlemen of the county and town were present, with upwards of five hundred freemen of the borough. Several loyal and constitutional toasts were drunk, and Wm. Pochin, Esq., (one of the members of the county) and Robert Abney, Esq., of Lindley, were unanimously chosen stewards for the year ensuing.

At the close of 1789, a meeting of importance, marking the position assumed by the Dissenters of this district, was held at the Lion and Lamb inn, to consider what measures were proper to be pursued to procure the repeal of the Corporation and Test Acts, and other penal statutes in respect to matters of religion. The different town congregations requested that every congregation in the county would appoint a delegate or delegates to attend their ministers on the business. Accordingly, on the 20th of November, a large number of ministers and delegates met at the place appointed, and called Dr. Thomas Arnold to the chair. They adopted twelve resolutions, of which the main purpose has been already suggested ; but two are here copied entire :—

“That they (the meeting) deem it an act of injustice in the Civil Magistrate to inflict penalties on men for their religious principles, on a presumption that they are erroneous or hurtful; because men’s *Actions* alone, and not their speculative *Opinions*, are properly subject to his interference, and liable to the restriction of human laws.

“That, neither heated with party zeal, nor biassed by any unfriendly views to the Established Church, they only claim a participation in the privileges of a free people—the subjects of an equal government—a claim which not merely affects them as Protestant Dissenters, but with which they conceive the national honour, prosperity, and happiness to be connected.”

A committee was appointed to carry out the resolutions, consisting of Thomas Arnold, M.D., Chairman, Mr. Robert Brewin, Mr. Joseph Chamberlin, Mr. Wm. Chamberlin, Mr. John Coltman (the Newarke), Mr. Matthew Reed, Mr. Thomas Richards, Mr. Robert Ward, Mr. Francis Pick, Mr. Wm. Oram, Mr. John Coltman, Mr. Goode, Mr. Francis Burgess, Mr. Wm. Lamb, Mr. James Nutt, and Mr. Thomas Bankart; with the Ministers of the Congregations.

The effects of the French revolution were felt in this island by the stimulus imparted to political action everywhere. The Conservatives of Leicester held frequent meetings in connection with the Constitutional Society, when Charles Loraine Smith, Esq., took the chair. They resolved to hold their Annual Feast on the 10th of March, 1790, to celebrate the day on which the king’s restoration to health was announced to Parliament.

At the same time, the Protestant Dissenters were roused to renewed exertions on behalf of religious freedom. Their second general meeting was held at the Lion and Lamb Inn, Leicester, on the 13th of January, Dr. Thomas Arnold presiding. Their only aim, under the circumstances of the period, was to obtain the repeal of such parts of the Corporation and Tests Acts as affected Protestant Dissenters. They therefore resolved on sending delegates to a general

or national meeting, to be held in the Metropolis, and they appointed as delegates the following gentlemen:—William Hood, Esq., Henry Coleman, Esq., Rev. John Atchison, Thomas Paget, Esq., John Lovewell, Esq., and Mr. Royce. They further resolved on raising by voluntary subscription the sum of one hundred and fifty pounds, among the members of each congregation of Dissenters in the counties of Leicester and Rutland. Mr. Robert Brewin (who had acted as Treasurer) was also thanked for his services and asked to continue them. On the same day, a meeting of Dissenting Deputies of the three Denominations, resident in Derby, Nottingham, Lincoln, Warwick, Worcester, Salop, and Stafford, was held at Leicester, Samuel Shore, Esq., in the chair, when a long series of resolutions was passed, filling more than a column of the *Leicester Journal*. The object of the meetings was to promote the agitation in Parliament in favour of their claims, by means of a national gathering in London. The groundwork of the Dissenters' position was thus expressed in one of their resolutions: "That all subjects of the State, conducting themselves in an equally peaceable manner, are equally entitled, not only to protection in the possession of their peaceable rights, but also to any civil honours or emoluments which are accessible to other subjects, without any regard to their religious opinions or practices."

A warm local controversy ensued; and the Corporation met to consider the proper course to pursue in reference to the agitation. At a Common Hall they assumed a very high tone towards the Dissenters; one of their resolutions asserting "That the admission of Dissenters into civil offices would give them perpetual opportunities of injuring the State, by applying the powers with which they would be intrusted to the support of their own party;" another resolution quietly informing Dissenters that all they urged respecting their own "Moderation" was "absurd," as "no men gave themselves bad characters." Thus the Corporation swept the Dissenters away with a brush, as they would have done the cobwebs and spiders in the Guildhall.

In accordance with their announcement, the Constitutional Society held their Great Feast on the 10th of March, under the auspices of the Stewards, Charles Loraine Smith, Esq., and Thos. Babington, Esq., at the Three Cranes and the Three Crowns Inns. Upwards of nine hundred persons dined together on the occasion. The Earl of Winchelsea, Sir Thomas Cave, Bart., and Eliab Harvey, R. Grosvenor, Edward Farnham, Thomas Farnham, J. Foster, Thomas Fisher, John Clarke, and Shirley Steele Perkins, Esq., with the Mayor and Aldermen of the Borough, and many of the clergy of town and county, were present, and took part in the proceedings. The toasts were of



the usual description. After the King and Queen and Royal Family, and the Society, came Mr. Pitt—the idol of the Society; in fact, the dinner was as much an ovation in his honour, as it was a celebration of the king's mental restoration to sanity.

It was hardly to be supposed the friends of Liberalism would lie down idly while their political opponents were thus active and demonstrative; we find therefore that *they*, too, held their meeting. They designated themselves the "Independent Interest." They dined on the 23rd of April, to celebrate the National Thanksgiving Day for His Majesty's Recovery. Their Presidents were Col. Pochin and Thomas Boothby Parkyns, Esq.; their Vice-Presidents, Clement Winstanley and Mayor Cheselden; and their Stewards, Sir John Danvers, Bart., Sir George Robinson, Bart., Sir W. C. F. Skeffington, Bart., C. Morris, Esq., C. J. Packe, Esq., Lieutenant-Col. Packe, Robert Abney, Esq., Walter Ruding, Esq., E. C. Hartopp, Esq., J. Suff. Brown, Esq., Henry Coleman, Esq., and John Pares, Esq. Upwards of fifteen hundred persons sat down to dinner, and the meeting was attended by leading gentlemen of the town and county. The principal toasts were the King, the Prince of Wales, and the Queen and Royal Family, and others; but not, of course, Mr. Pitt—against whom and the Corporation the dinner was intended to be a counter-demonstration.

The Leicestershire Militia was out, this year, for its annual exercise, and was disembodied on the 7th of May. Great preparations being now made to fit out the fleet, orders to press all straggling seamen and seafaring men into the service were issued by the Privy Council, and carried out in Leicester.

For some reasons not apparent on its minutes of proceedings, the Revolution Club this year reorganized itself. It was declared to be founded for the purposes of uniting the Independent Interest of the Town and County of Leicester; preserving the freedom of election; and maintaining the other rights and franchises of the burgesses and others; and supporting and defending them against any oppression or innovation they might suffer from the undue exertions of misplaced power, or the venal influence of the enemies to freedom. "Fully sensible of the importance of such an institution, and of the good effect which must arise therefrom, and animated by the spirit of patriotism, which venerates and seeks to preserve inviolate the Rights of Man," said the subscribers, "we engage to promote the purposes of this institution to the extent of our power and ability."

The names of the subscribers were recorded in the Minute Book.<sup>h</sup> They were :

<sup>h</sup> Now in the possession of the author.

T. B. Parkyns, Esq. [afterwards elevated to the peerage by the title of Baron Raneliffe.]

John Simpson, Esq. [of Launde Abbey, father of the late John Finch Simpson, Esq.]

Clement Winstanley, Esq. [of Braunstone Hall, who married a sister of Lord Raneliffe.]

Wm. Pochin, Esq. [a kinsman of Geo. Pochin, Esq., father of William Ann Pochin, Esq.]

Robert Abney, Esq. [great-uncle of the late W. W. Abney, Esq.]

E. C. Hartopp, Esq. [afterwards created a baronet, and father of the late Sir William Edmund.]

Thomas Pares, Esq. [uncle of the late Thomas Pares, Esq., of Hopwell Hall.]

Sir John Danvers, Bart. [maternal grandfather of the late Lord Lanesborough.]

John Pares, Esq. [father of the late Thomas Pares, Esq., of Hopwell Hall.]

Major Cheselden.

Walter Ruding, Esq. [formerly of West Cotes, near Leicester.]

Thomas Paget, Esq. [grandfather of T. T. Paget, Esq., of Hum-berstone.]

J. Chamberlin, Esq.

Henry Coleman, sen., Esq. [grandfather of H. F. Coleman, Esq., of Evington Hall.]

E. Davie, Esq.

Among the remaining subscribers occur the names of Messrs. Jno. Bankart, Edward Bankart, William Ball, Jos. Bennett, Robert Biddle, Davis Black, E. Blower, Thomas Bown, sen., Thomas Bown, jun., Edward Bracebridge, Geo. Bracebridge, Francis Burgess, T. Bell, Wm. Carver, J. E. Carver, Robt. Cloudsley, Jos. Dumelow, Geo. Dawson, Robt. Freer, James Froane, Richard Flint, W. Grundy, John Goode, Joseph Hopewell, Edward Hodges, — Inkersole, Henry King, Wm. Keightley, John Kettleby, C. Langdon, J. Lawton, Francis Lomas, Thos. Lockwood, Jno. Marshall, Wm. Oram, James Poynton, Wm. Peet, Richard Phillips, — Prentice, — Proudman, Henry Richards, Thos. Richards, Thos. Swinburne, — Wallis, Ed. Webb (Secretary), Robert Whittle, Jas. Wightman, Thomas Wood, and Henry Wood. One clergyman only was on the list—the Rev. Mr. Woodcock, of Barkby. The foregoing persons constituted the avowed Whig or Liberal Party of this locality eighty years ago. At their meeting on the 4th of November, the members celebrated their Anniversary at the Lion and Lamb and other inns; five hundred sympathizers sitting down to dine together, including (says the

*Leicester Journal*) the "principal gentlemen of the town and county."

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## CHAPTER XVII.

ERECTION OF THE BOROUGH GAOL—LOCAL IMPROVEMENTS—THE SUNDAY SCHOOLS—THE LOUGHBOROUGH CANAL—REVIVAL OF FREEMASONRY—PARTY FEELING—MR. PHILLIPS AND THE PERMANENT LIBRARY—THE SLAVE TRADE—A HOUSE OF INDUSTRY IN LEICESTER—THE HOSIERS' ASSOCIATION—POLITICAL EXCITEMENT—LOCAL REACTION—THE LOYAL VICTUALLERS OF LEICESTER—THE CONSTITUTIONAL SOCIETY—TORY MEETINGS—THE PROSECUTION OF MR. PHILLIPS—HIS SENTENCE—THE LEICESTER MILITIA—THE MAYOR'S FEAST.

THE year 1791 was comparatively uneventful in Leicester. Some facts, however, will bear recording, to connect the year with its predecessors. Among these may be mentioned the erection of the Gaol, now used for the detention of borough prisoners, but then in the possession of the county authorities. The interior arrangements were said to be on the plan of Howard, and the front was pronounced to be "awfully magnificent." Daily postal communication between Leicester and Melton was established in April, by the Postmaster General. Street improvements were also carried out: in the main street at the South Gate footways were formed on each side, which had not existed before, and a "crown causeway" was laid out in the middle for carriages. But it was not extended to the North Bridge, and it was not lighted by oil-lamps as High Street was; so the *Journal* expressed a hope that the public spirit of the town would be equal to the emergency.

The establishment of Sunday Schools having proved to be of advantage, they were carried on for five years; but this year the zeal of their promoters began to relax, and therefore an effort was needed to maintain them in a state of efficiency, and the original advocates of the system were exhorted not to desert the cause. At a meeting of the Special Committee of Subscribers, held in St.

Martin's Vestry, on the 28th of April, resolutions were passed embodying this appeal, as the expenditure incurred had exceeded the income. Subscription lists were published, in which (as is observed in later days) the names of the contributors were those of inhabitants who had already given, and which regularly recurred in connection with benevolent proceedings—the regular absence from the list of others, equally competent to give, being as “conspicuous.”

The Militia were called on to assemble on the 11th of April, for twenty-eight days' training, by the notice of the Deputy Lieutenants—C. Winstanley, E. C. Hartopp, E. Cheselden, and H. Coleman, Esqrs. The men went through their exercises, and concluded the last annual meeting of the regiment on May the 7th, having earned a commendatory report.

A matter of more general interest than any other to the townspeople, was the passing of the bill for canalizing the Soar from Leicester to Loughborough. It received the royal assent on Friday, May the 13th. The measure had been long and anxiously desired by the public. On the 1st of June, a meeting of the proprietors of the Leicester Navigation was held at the Three Crowns, to consider on the proper methods of facilitating the plan. Several resolutions having that object in view were passed, and contracts for the works were advertised for in the *Journal*.

Freemasonry, like other institutions, has to tell its story of flux and reflux, and its periods of prosperity and depression, and this year had its revival in Leicester. For some few years in languid operation, the Craft became again active; the occasion of its manifestation being a procession on June the 27th, from the Lodge-room at the Lion and Dolphin, to St. Martin's Church, where a sermon was preached by the Rev. Brother Jeremiah Bigsby of Nottingham. An immense concourse of people witnessed the pageant; the Brethren of St. John's, with others from neighbouring counties, adorned with their insignia, with banners displayed, and music playing, constituting the procession.

Political feeling began now to acquire a bitterness and a strength here and elsewhere, which had not for many years been displayed. The progress of events in the French capital helped to bring into strong relief the principles of the two existing parties. On the one side, the Whigs to a great extent sympathized with the revolutionary movement, which they saw had been attended with the overthrow of an insolent and profligate aristocracy, and a monarch identified with a selfish and autocratic policy; on the other, the Tories viewed the movement with dread and aversion, believing it to be the precursor of a period of anarchy and bloodshed, in which the Church, the

State, and every national institution, would be swept away by the terrible current of popular frenzy. In this town, Mr. Phillips, the bookseller—then carrying on his business at the corner of Gallowtree Gate and Humberstone Gate—was particularly prominent as the advocate of French political principles. He opened a pamphlet-room, in which Thomas Paine's works were provided for perusal, and week after week the *Journal* announced in its advertising columns the titles of the books in which the cause of the French democrats was warmly espoused and defended; all to be seen at Phillips's. When the King of France fled from Paris, on the 20th of June, the two countries were in a fever of excitement. In this state of the public mind, the Liberals of Birmingham met to dine together at the Hotel, Temple Row, on the 14th of July, to celebrate the second anniversary of the French Revolution. A "Church and King" mob collected round the Hotel, and demolished the windows, and then went to Dr. Priestley's new meeting, to the old meeting house, and to the Doctor's residence. The two former they burned down, with several houses in the town and country, the residences of the leading Liberals, and the valuable philosophical apparatus, books, and manuscripts of Dr. Priestley. Many of the rioters were either suffocated or burnt in the flames. Dr. Priestley quitted Birmingham in consequence of the outrage, and finally settled in America. The leading Conservatives of Birmingham were blamed for having incited the populace, by having in public frequently drunk confusion and damnation to the sympathizers with the French Reformers.

Mr. Phillips's exertions were not merely of a political nature: he devoted himself with considerable assiduity to exciting a taste for literature and scientific enquiry in Leicester. One of his special efforts was the origination of a Literary Society, which was instituted for the purpose of establishing a Permanent Library, still existing. Dating from July the 31st, 1789, it held its annual dinner at the Three Cranes, on the 26th of August, this year, and the following gentlemen constituted its Committee:—The Rev. John Achison, Dr. T. Arnold, Mr. John Brooke, Mr. Robert Burnaby, Mr. Robert Brewin, Dr. Bree, Mr. H. Carter, Mr. John Carter, Mr. H. Coleman, Mr. Coltman (the Newarke), Mr. Coltman (Shambles Lane), Mr. Copson, the Rev. John Deacon, Mr. J. Foster, Mr. Paget (surgeon), and Mr. M. Read. Mr. Mansfield was the Treasurer, Mr. Phillips the Secretary, of the Permanent Library.

Undeterred by the prevalence of an animosity which was unequalled in intensity by any feeling in more modern times, the Revolution Club held its annual meeting on the 4th of November, when upwards of four hundred dined together as usual; though the

growing predominance of the ultra-Revolutionists had begun to alarm many Liberal politicians. The stewards of the club appointed for the succeeding year were Edward Abney, Esq., and Mr. Buxton.

A meeting of the inhabitants of Leicester was held on February the 1st, 1792, to consider the propriety of petitioning parliament for the abolition of the slave trade. The business of the meeting was opened by Thomas Babington, Esq., in a speech of considerable length, in which he exposed the horrid means employed in carrying on the iniquitous traffic, and urged in a very forcible manner the necessity of making national exertions to procure the overthrow of the system. Mr. Neal, the Mayor, was in the chair, and the meeting was addressed by several gentlemen. Among the resolutions adopted was one of warm thanks to Mr. Wilberforce, who had moved the abolition of the slave trade in the House of Commons, and those gentlemen who ably supported him by their convincing eloquence. The late Mr. Wm. Gardiner relates in his *Music and Friends* that "The great champion, Mr. Wilberforce, found an ardent fellow-labourer in Mr. Babington. It was in the groves of Rothley Temple that these philanthropists drew up a statement, extending to two thousand pages, of the cruelties practised in the inhuman traffic."

It is very remarkable that, at this time, the arrangements for the relief of the destitute in Leicester were so deficient, that it was found necessary to call a meeting of the inhabitants to consult together concerning the establishment of a House of Industry for the relief, employment, management, and care of the necessitous poor of the several parishes. On the 28th of February the meeting was held, when resolutions to the following effect were adopted: "That it was the opinion of the persons present that such a House of Industry was needed, as would be productive of a reform in the manners and principles of the poor, and would diminish the rates, which had been oppressive; that it would be proper to apply to parliament in the existing session, for an act to furnish the inhabitants with power to execute the plan of union and maintenance; that a petition on the subject be prepared; and that a committee be appointed, with directions to carry the plan into effect, by framing a bill containing the requisite powers to establish the institution—the committee to consist of the Mayor and Justices of the Borough of Leicester, Dr. Bree, John Pares, Esq., Mr. Deakin, W. Ruding, Esq., Mr. Dabbs, Mr. H. Cooper, Mr. G. Dawson, Mr. Joseph Wheatley, and the Ministers of all the parishes in the town of Leicester." The committee took for their model the House of Industry at Shrewsbury, and in an address to the public showed how the system operated in

that town,<sup>1</sup> where, it was stated, the rates were reduced one-third—the economy consequent upon placing and supporting the poor of Leicester in one building, instead of five, being insisted upon by the committee.

The hosiers of the town this year bestirred themselves to check the embezzlement of goods, the disposing of stolen goods, the failure to return materials given out for manufacture, and other frauds or offences of like nature. They held a general meeting in the Exchange, for these objects, and there opened a subscription for securing the formation of an association. The persons present were Dalby, Copson, and Co.; W. Dabbs; J. and E. Bankart; Samuel Markland; J. Saywell; Goode, Richards, and Hartshorn; Astle and Froane; Samuel Towndrow; Freer and Thompson; Harris, Leach, and Harris; W. Simpson; W. Scott and Sons; Burgess, Goodrich and Sons; J. Coltman and Son; Oram and Hillhouse; W. Proudman; Clement Dumelow; G. and A. Carr; Francis Burgess; and J. and T. Coleman. Other hosiers subsequently joined the association. A complete code of rules was drawn up and adopted at a meeting held at the Three Crowns, on the 19th of April. Mr. Wm. Heyrick was the solicitor to the society.

This was a year of excitement in England not preceded, perhaps, since the great Civil War of the preceding century. It was created by the proceedings of the French Revolutionists, which met with enthusiastic approval, up to a certain point, among the Reformers of this country. The meeting of the "Friends of the People" in London, in May, was held to express sympathy with the revolutionary movement in France; and the Corresponding Society, the Revolution Clubs, and other Societies, forwarded addresses of congratulation on their success to the National Assembly. This proceeding aroused the king and the Government to opposition; and in consequence George the Third issued a proclamation, dated May 24, for the suppression of seditious correspondence with people abroad and of seditious publications at home. In June, the mob of Paris compelled King Louis to wear the *bonnet rouge*—the red cap of liberty.

In August, having withdrawn into the Tuileries, with his family, he was besieged there by the populace, and his Swiss guards slain in his defence. From that moment his royal functions were suspended, and his family incarcerated in the Temple. Red Republicanism was now in the ascendant. The streets of Paris witnessed the murder of twelve hundred persons, and among the rest that of the Princess de Lamballes, whose head was severed from her body and carried in brutal triumph, on the point of a pole, through the thoroughfares.

<sup>1</sup> Inserted in *Leicester Journal*, March 2, 1792.

At home the effects produced on the public mind were various. In Leicester, the Corporation in Common Hall met in June to address the king in response to his proclamation; and, within a week after, the county gentry also assembled in the Castle for a like purpose. Among those who took part in the latter occasion, were some of those gentlemen who had in previous years shown themselves at the anniversaries of the Revolution Club; and, indeed, English Reformers generally were alienated from the French Revolution after the sanguinary events occurring in the month of September; those who still adhered to the principles of Liberalism being called "Jacobins," by way of opprobrium. In November, when the Revolution Club of Leicester should, according to usage, have held its anniversary, no chairman's name was announced as that of the president at the dinner; though the friends of the Club were invited to attend at the Bear and Swan Inn, and ordinaries were provided elsewhere. The reactionary tide had set in, and its strongest indication in this town was an assembly of the inhabitants, held at the Town Hall, on December 17, when a resolution was adopted expressing their solemn and firm determination to support the Constitution of Great Britain, and their sincere and steady attachment to the king's person and family. This was moved by Edmund Wigley Esq., and seconded by John Pares, Esq. The point insisted upon, was the necessity for men of all descriptions uniting in that hour of danger and alarm, and declaring their attachment to the Constitution of King, Lords, and Commons. A large portion of the Liberal party everywhere seceded, who were designated "Alarmists" by those who remained in connection with the party. Locally, the latter were known as the "Constitutional Society;" but they published no list of the names of members, which induced a writer in the *Journal* to challenge them to come forth into publicity. Their Secretary wrote in their defence, and they issued a kind of manifesto; though Mr. Phillips (who had commenced a Liberal journal called the *Leicester Herald* on the 5th of May) seems to have been extremely cautious in his expression of opinion, at a period when the public mind was so highly inflamed.

Everybody was now wishful to be considered "loyal," and joined in the cry of "mad dog" against every other person who did not pronounce the shibboleth of the high Tory party; and there were also some politicians who, without doubt, heartily approved of the overthrow of the French monarchy and aristocracy. Even the licensed victuallers of Leicester (by whom purely political demonstrations are but rarely made) joined in the demonstration against the "Jacobins." They held a meeting (Mr. Francis Hayes in the chair) at which they resolved:—



"That we will suffer no Person or Persons to hold any Society in our respective Houses, or to make use of any Expressions, which have a tendency to subvert or to disturb the Government, without giving immediate Notice to the Mayor or other Magistrates.

"And, being assembled together, we think it a fit Occasion to pass another Resolution, though not applying particularly to the Subject, which has lately occupied so much of the public Attention.

"We therefore unanimously bind ourselves to the Public and to each other,—That, at any future Time, should Riots take Place in the Town, ON ANY OCCASION WHATEVER, we will use every Precaution in our Power to prevent the Assembling of any of the Rioters in our Houses: and will give the earliest Information to the Magistrates of the *first* Appearance of any Tumult, and of the Names of all those who attempt to excite it, and will pursue every other Measure which becomes Men earnestly anxious for the Peace and Welfare of their Country and their Town."

About one hundred and fifty signatures appeared to the advertisement containing the resolutions.

The "Constitutional Society" of Leicester (which held a meeting on the last day of the year 1792) felt called upon to raise its voice, however feebly, in opposition to the storm which had been raised by the Conservative nobility, gentry, and clergy, all over the county, in denunciation of all Liberals and Reformers. Its manifesto (signed by Mr. George Bown, the Secretary) declared that the letter of the Duke of Richmond conveyed its sentiments on the subject of Parliamentary Reform; that the happiness of the people and the security of the constitution depended on the maintenance of peace; that Mr. Fox's manly and independent conduct deserved the warmest thanks of the society and the whole nation; and that the society assented to the resolutions lately passed at the Town Hall, but regarded all such meetings as mere manœuvres of placemen and courtiers, and would cooperate with the noblemen and gentlemen of the county in supporting peace and order, and in preventing the circulation of seditious writings. The last clause of the sentence related to an advertisement signed by Clement Winstanley, Wm. Pochin, Chas. James Packe, Henry Coleman, jun., John Simpson, Wm. Bentley, and Thos. Buxton, Esqrs., and others, who had been known as Whigs before the outbreak of the French Revolution, but who had taken fright at the excesses committed by the *rouges* of Paris, and had united with the Tories in adopting resolutions in condemnation of seditious assemblies and publications. The Committee of the Association for promoting the king's proclamation were provoked by the advertisement of the Constitutional Society into a counter-demonstration, and they accordingly delivered their opinion to the public concerning that

Society, which they called a "factionous club," whose object in urging petitions to the throne that the nation might not be plunged into all the horrors of a destructive war, they declared to be, to make the unwary disaffected to the government and discontented with the necessary measures it might take.

But the opposition to the Liberals of Leicester was not confined to the adoption of resolutions condemnatory of their principles; as it also took the form of legal prosecution. The Government selected as the object of their persecution Mr. Phillips, the proprietor and conductor of the *Leicester Herald*, and by their instructions three separate bills of indictment were found against him, at the Borough Sessions held in January 1793, for selling a publication called the Jockey Club, and two of the works of Paine. Mr. Phillips considered that hard measure was dealt out to him; seeing that the first of these had not then been found to be a libel, and at that time was upon sale in every bookseller's shop, while of the two last he had not sold a single copy after the verdict had been delivered against Paine, nor for sometime previous. About this time also, a second paper advocating Liberal principles, called the *Leicester Chronicle*, had been commenced by Mr. Thomas Combe, and was carried on for a few months; but it succumbed on being threatened with a Government prosecution.

In reference to the war with France, it was perfectly idle in the English Reformers to take any proceedings by way of protest, as events took place on the 17th and 21st of January which rendered a conflict with the French universally popular: these were, the sentence to death and execution of Louis the Sixteenth. When Louis was dragged to the scaffold, to suffer an ignominious and bloody death, a thrill of horror was felt all through England. All professions of Liberalism, however consistent and moderate, were then regarded as identical with the ferocious fanaticism of Danton and Robespierre; and while the fever of mingled terror and abhorrence lasted, it was dangerous to avow any sympathy whatever with the principles of Reform; for all government officials and local authorities confounded them, either intentionally or ignorantly, with the tenets of the French Revolutionists. The war with France was therefore hotly demanded. Mr. Fox, however, had the courage to deprecate it when the warlike furor was at its height. Towards the close of the month of March, the County Grand Jury forwarded a Requisition to the High Sheriff, asking him to convene a meeting of the Nobility, Clergy, Freeholders, and others, for the purpose of taking into consideration the propriety of addressing his Majesty on the position of public affairs at that crisis; and the High Sheriff, in accordance with the request, called a meeting for the 9th of

April; but four Whig gentlemen—John Simpson, Chas. James Packe, Clement Winstanley, and Walter Ruding—expressed, in an advertisement in the *Journal*, their disapprobation of the Sheriff's announcement and their opinion that the meeting was unnecessary. It was held, however, in pursuance of the announcement; when Lord Ferrers moved an address to the king in approval of the war, which was seconded by Sir Charles Cave, and carried; there being only two dissentients present. The Rev. Mr. Burnaby, Mr. Hungerford, Mr. Loraine Smith, Sir Justinian Isham, and Mr. Herrick, of Beaumanor, took part in the proceedings.

The day after this meeting, Mr. Phillips was placed on his trial at the Town Hall. The Hon. Spencer Percival and Mr. Vaughan were engaged to conduct the prosecution, and Mr. Dayrell the defence. The defendant was not allowed to challenge any of the jurors. The three indictments were proceeded with, and twelve hours were occupied in the trial. Mr. Phillips was convicted of selling the "Rights of Man," on the simple evidence of a sale of it on the 6th of December. He was found guilty in a special verdict of selling the "Jockey Club," which constituted the nature of the second indictment. He was acquitted of the third indictment. Judgment was respited until next day (Saturday), April the 13th, to allow Mr. Phillips time to present to the Court affidavits in extenuation of his conduct. These were presented, and amounted chiefly to this—that Mr. Phillips was not aware that the books he had sold were of a libellous or seditious nature until the middle of December, and that then he immediately discontinued the sale, ordering his shopman to sell no more of the copies; but that, after the verdict was delivered against Paine, various applications were made for these books, which were refused, and, among others, one made by a brother of the informant (Jackson), who used entreaties to induce him (Mr. Phillips) to part with a copy, but did not succeed. The defendant also alleged that he sold the books in the usual course of business, as he had done Burke's works, and all the others arising out of the controversy. But all these representations were thrown away, as the Recorder sentenced Mr. Phillips to eighteen months' imprisonment in the Borough Gaol!

In his paper Mr. Phillips complained bitterly and justly of the proceedings and sentence. He said:—

"The only Evidence called upon to prove the facts contained in the three indictments was James Jackson a Journeyman Shoemaker, who stated that he was employed to purchase these Books, on account of the Prosecution, by the particular directions of Mr. Wm. Heyrick, the Town Clerk. He acknowledged that he purchased the Books of Mr. Phillips's Shopman,—

readily admitting, at the same time, that he believed they might be had at any of the other Booksellers' Shops, but his order was to apply for them at Mr. Phillips's. This is in fact the substance of the Evidence on which the Foreman of the Jury pronounced *GUILTY*, with a recommendation to the Candour and Mercy of the Court. On account of Prejudices arising from Party Politics, in local jurisdictions, it was recommended to Mr. Phillips, by his Counsel, and indeed his Friends in general, to take advantage of that most inestimable Privilege (sacred to Englishmen) of challenging his Jury. This right was claimed and asserted on the part of Mr. Phillips, but peremptorily objected to, by the Counsel for the Prosecution, and after much altercation it was at length ordered by the Court, that the Jury should be accepted and sworn in, in the same order as they were at first nominated."

This year, the Leicestershire Militia, commanded by Col. Pochin, marched from Leicester to Norwich. While in Leicester, the conduct of officers and men secured the approbation of the inhabitants of town and county. Nothing showed the estimation in which the regiment was held, more than the fact of the officers being obliged to decline the offer of more than forty men who volunteered to serve in the body after the numbers were complete. A letter received from Norwich, in June, stated that the four companies took part in the celebration of the King's birthday, and much praise was accorded to them for their steady and military appearance. They were then expected to be shortly encamped at Hoptun, near Lowestoft. The military spirit of the nation was now roused to its highest pitch of zeal, and the non-military part of the public in Leicester testified their participation in it, by subscribing to a fund for supplying the British soldiers on the Continent with flannel under-waistcoats, caps, and stockings. A list of subscriptions, headed by John Mansfield, Esq., the Mayor, and containing the names of all the principal townspeople, appeared in the *Journal*, week after week, and proved how extensive was the feeling in support of the war with France.

The Revolution Club never met again after the year 1792. The revolting deeds of the *sans-culottes* of Paris and the execution of the French king entirely stopped the meetings of the Club; and few were they who dared to avow, that in spite of the follies and iniquities enacted in the name of Liberty, they still cherished her in their hearts, and remained her firm and sincere votaries. An ardent spirit, here and there (like Mr. Geo. Bown), defied public opinion, and did not hesitate to proclaim themselves admirers of most of the deeds of the National Assembly and the Convention. But it was the fashion generally for the time, among politicians, to sink minor differences, and to meet in public as if there were no other feeling in existence than one of attachment to the Constitution and hatred of

the Red Republic. When, therefore, the Mayor's Feast took place in November, and Mr. Mansfield gave a venison dinner, with a rich and varied dessert, consisting of pines, pomegranates, and all the choicest fruits, he was honoured with the presence of Earl Ferrers, Viscount Wentworth, Lord Tamworth, and the Rev. Sir Charles Cave, Bart.; William Pochin, Esq., and Penn Asheton Curzon, Esq. (members for the County); and John Peach Hungerford, Esq., Chas. James Packe, Esq., Charles Loraine, Esq., John Simpson, Esq., Wm. Heyrick, Esq., John Foster, Esq., Thomas Fisher, Esq., Joseph Boulton, Esq., Charles Humfreys, Esq., Dr. Vaughan, Dr. Bree, and a great number of the clergy. Many loyal and constitutional toasts were drunk, and the following was received with repeated bursts of applause: "May the British Constitution be never infected with the French Disease." Such, in the presence of the gentry and clergy of Leicestershire, the exclusive friends of the Altar and the Throne, was the height to which public sentiment was exalted and refined!

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## CHAPTER XVIII.

FIRST ARRIVAL OF CANAL BOATS AT LEICESTER—EXPECTATION OF FRENCH INVASION—PROPOSED FORMATION OF VOLUNTEER YEOMANRY CAVALRY—PEACE MOVEMENT—THE PERSECUTION OF HARLEY VAUGHAN—HIS TRIAL—HIS SUICIDE—APPREHENSION OF MR. BOWN—ADDITIONAL FAIRS—THE "ANTI-GALLICAN"—THE ADELPHI SOCIETY—THE CAP OF LIBERTY—LOYAL DEMONSTRATIONS—VOLUNTEER MOVEMENTS—THE LEICESTER FENCIBLES IN ACTION—FAMINE RIOTS—THE "BARROW BUTCHERY"—SUPPRESSION OF THE RACES—FIRE AT MR. PHILLIPS'S—THE RELIEF COMMITTEE IN A DILEMMA—SALE OF THE VAUXHALL—PEACE PETITIONING—THE PROVISIONAL CAVALRY—DEATH OF CAPT. HEYRICK—GEORGE DAVENPORT AND HIS ADVENTURES AND EXECUTION.

THE attention of the people of Leicester was much occupied in the year 1794 with the projected canal communication to Loughborough, Melton, and other places. On Monday, the 6th of January, the

proprietors met in considerable numbers, to receive the report of the committee, from which it appeared that the line was already navigable several miles above Loughborough, and that, in a few days, it would be open to the junction of the Melton navigation, by which means the trade might pass up the Wreake as far as Rearsby. In the same time, it was expected the passage would be free to Thurmaston, and thence to the town in two months, or even sooner, when a communication would be made with the Union Canal. On Saturday, February the 22nd, two boats, the property of Messrs. Ella, Douglas and Poynton, and Messrs. Coleman, Burbidge and Co., arrived at their respective wharves in Leicester from Gainsborough, laden with merchandise, freighted from that place. Each returned with cargoes of wool; but the hope of the inhabitants was that coal would soon be forthcoming in considerable quantities from Derbyshire.

While, at home, plans of internal communication were occupying the public attention, abroad the successes of the French revolutionary armies were spreading terror among the upholders of the ancient monarchies; and in this country an expectation of invasion was generally entertained. In Leicester, the young men of all classes were invoked to enrol themselves in a public book, as ready to serve in defence of the country on the landing of the French. A general meeting of the County of Leicester was also held at the Castle, to take into consideration the propriety of opening a subscription for augmenting the Militia, at which George Moore, Esq., High Sheriff, occupied the chair, and Sir Charles Cave, Bart., Mr. Pochin, Mr. Penn Asheton Curzon, and Mr. Hungerford, supported the proposal. A considerable sum was immediately subscribed, the Duke of Beaufort, the Lord Lieutenant, heading the list with £500. At a second meeting having the same object, held on April the 10th, Earl Ferrers presided; when it was resolved that a number of men be added to each company in the Leicestershire Militia, and forthwith raised, to the extent of eighty-eight, including sergeants and corporals, and that Captain Farmer of the Militia be appointed to levy men; and, further, that a number of men, not fewer than one hundred, be formed as cavalry; agreeably to the third article in the Secretary of State's recommendation, dated Whitehall, March the 14th, 1794, inclosed in the Lord Lieutenant's letter to the High Sheriff. Other resolutions, subsidiary to these, were passed. Between £7,000 and £8,000 were raised in consequence at these meetings. On the 28th of April, a special meeting was held, under the auspices of Penn Asheton Curzon, Esq., M.P., to promote the formation of the Leicestershire Volunteer Yeomanry, to consist of six troops, each containing not fewer than fifty men, officers included. The Duke of Beaufort at this time made

various promotions and appointments in the Militia—Major Cheselden to be Lieutenant-Colonel in place of Charles James Packe, resigned; Lieutenant T. B. Buxton to be Captain in place of John Suffield Brown, promoted; Ensign John Wilkes to be Lieutenant in place of Joseph Broughton Sleath, resigned; Ensign B. Robinson to be Lieutenant in the place of T. B. Buxton, promoted; Charles Garner to be Ensign in place of Thomas Green, resigned; Benjamin Hands to be Ensign in place of B. Robinson, promoted; and Geo. Vowè, to be Ensign. A subscription for the purchase of shoes for the non-commissioned officers and privates of the Militia was also carried on, most of the principal townsmen contributing to the fund.

But while the Tory party was urging on war with France with vehemence and passion, the Reformers—at least, those who were not under coercion—called out for peace. The Marquis of Lansdowne moved an Address to the king, requesting that his Majesty would establish peace as soon as he conveniently could to his own honour, and the safety and advantage of Great Britain; but Lord Grenville insisted that the proposition meant nothing less than this—Shall the horrors of France be introduced into England?

The state of feeling in the provincial towns was signally exemplified in Leicester, where every professor of Liberalism was hunted down like a mad dog or a felon. At this time the venerable Sergeant Vaughan, a family connection of the Earl of Oxford, was residing in this town. Having been compelled through age and infirmity to relinquish all professional emoluments, he was living upon narrowed means, with his son, Harley, the god-son of the fourth Earl of Oxford, a high-bred and accomplished young gentleman. The latter was under the necessity of accepting the second mastership of the Free Grammar School, at a yearly salary of £30, and he also gave lessons in the French language. He lectured occasionally on moral philosophy to the members of the Adelphi Society, then including Mr. Phillips, the late Mr. Paget (the surgeon), the late Mr. Wm. Gardiner, and other young Reformers of that day. Mr. Harley Vaughan was seen reading a handbill, which he had received from a coachman, the purport of which was to call a meeting in favour of Peace and Reform at Manchester. This he gave to a person who was then a supporter of the Tory Corporation, who passed it on to the local authorities. They arraigned Mr. Vaughan, at the Quarter Sessions in April, on the charge of distributing seditious papers, tending to inflame the minds of the people and render them dissatisfied with the Government. A jury of ignorant townsmen, all of them bitter partisans of the high-handed system of administration then in operation, found Mr. Harley Vaughan guilty; and the Recorder sentenced him to three months'

imprisonment in the Borough Gaol. Deprived of his meagre appointment by this act of judicial cruelty, and degraded in his own eyes by an incarceration with malefactors in a common prison, on his release the unfortunate gentleman, brooding over his wrongs and the persecution to which he had been subjected, walked into the fields until he reached a pond of water, when, tying his legs together, he threw himself in, and was drowned. The melancholy death of "Harley Vaughan" as he was commonly called, was remembered not many years ago, by a few aged people, and it served only to strengthen the aversion felt for the Corporation and the party then in the ascendant. He was, indeed, the martyr of Leicester Liberalism.

Mr. Harley Vaughan's conviction was followed, about a month afterwards, by the apprehension of Mr. George Bown, by a warrant of the magistrates, on a charge of pursuing seditious practices. It was proved that he was the chairman of a meeting of fifty or sixty persons, who assembled on Monday evenings in a room to which no new member was admitted without a cheque from a door-keeper, who asked each person what were his principles; to which the initiated replied "Revolution principles," or "Right principles." It was alleged that Mr. Bown kept the books and received the subscriptions; that the members addressed each other as "citizens;" and that "citizen" Bown had been heard to wish the French success.

A proposal having been made at several meetings of the graziers, farmers, butchers, and others, for the establishment of an additional number of fairs for fat and lean cattle and sheep, in Leicester, the Corporation was asked to give its sanction to the measure. The days named were January the 4th, June the 1st, August the 1st, September the 13th, and November the 2nd, and on them the Common Hall agreed the additional fairs should be held—the cattle to stand in Millstone Lane, the sheep in the usual places.

In May, the Mayor, (John Mansfield, Esq.) invited such gentlemen as were favourable to co-operation with the county, in the formation of the Cavalry, to assist in raising a part of the force among the inhabitants. At a meeting held on the 15th of that month, it was resolved that a book should be opened for receiving the names of volunteers into the cavalry, and another of volunteers into a corps of infantry; the books to be kept at the Post Office. On the 22nd, it appeared fifty persons had enrolled themselves to serve in the cavalry, and several respectable persons had volunteered in the infantry.

By way of counteracting the spread of "French principles," a party which did not deem the *Leicester Journal* sufficiently zealous, commenced a paper in June called the *Anti-Gallican*, which appears



to have been personal and virulent beyond precedent; so much so, in truth, that Mr. Gregory, the editor of the *Journal*, felt it necessary to say that he did not doubt that its promoters, as *gentlemen*, would discover, on a moment's reflection, they had exhibited more *spirit* than *propriety*. Mr. Phillips, in the *Leicester Herald*, treated the publication with contemptuous allusions. Between flank-fires, therefore, the *Anti-Gallican* speedily fell to the ground.

The prejudice of the local authorities against the principles of parliamentary reform and popular progress were only equalled by their intellectual obtuseness, as the following incident will serve to illustrate. The Adelphi Society (as Mr. Gardiner relates in his *Music and Friends*) met once a week in Mr. Phillips's schoolroom in Bond Street; and as electricity was then not generally understood, the young Adelphians entered into a variety of experiments. In making them they erected on the top of their rooms a high pole, in the form of a spear, to draw the electric fluid downwards. The first cause in which Robespierre distinguished himself was in defending Mr. Vessery, who was prosecuted for erecting a conductor to protect his house from lightning. The Corporation, thus prepared, therefore gave the society an intimation that its meetings had a dangerous character; electricity being evidently considered to have a seditious tendency. But rather more ludicrous than this was another circumstance which happened during the period of Revolutionary alarm. Two bachelor brothers, named Ludlam, lived together in Leicester; the one a philosopher, the other a theologian. They were economists of time as well as money. They did everything in the shortest way. When, therefore, they wished the milkwoman to call, their practice was to hang out of an upper window an old red nightcap. It was then reported in the newspapers that the Ludlams of Leicester were such Republicans that they exhibited in front of their house the cap of liberty!

The "Jacobins" of Leicester had probably helped to alarm the county gentry and local Tories; for rumours were current of the former having met by hundreds in different parts of the town, having assembled by the side of Stocking Wood to learn the use of arms, and having applied to a gunsmith in Leicester to furnish them with a large number of stands of arms. Meanwhile, Mr. Pitt moved and carried in the Commons the Suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act; by virtue of which any suspected person could be arrested and imprisoned without ceremony. On the King's birthday, the Corporation and its supporters made a grand demonstration of loyalty. In the morning the church bells rang, and afterwards a bonfire was lighted in the Market Place. A sheep was roasted whole, and

distributed, with ale, among the populace. A number of gentlemen who dined at the Three Crowns, proceeded with a band of music to the bonfire, and there sang "God Save the King," and drank his Majesty's health; being then followed round the town by the people. On the same day, Messrs. Firmadge and Towndrow, the Chamberlains of the Corporation, gave a handsome entertainment at the Three Crowns Inn, when the guests drank loyal toasts, and "Success to their friends abroad, and confusion to their enemies at home."

For the rest of the year, nothing but volunteering was thought of by the townsmen. Early in July, the newly-raised Cavalry met on the Race Ground for the first time, and afterwards proceeded to the Market Place, "where all the beauty of Leicester," said the *Journal*, "was assembled at the windows, and seemed to express their entire confidence in the protection afforded them by so respectable a *corps*." Before the close of the month, the Leicester Volunteer Infantry, "formed for the defence of the town," numbered more than one hundred. They ballotted for their officers (subject to the approval of the Lord Lieutenant), determined upon their uniform, and adopted various regulations. In August a Ball was given in honour of the Cavalry, and they received their standards in the following month; Miss Linwood presenting them with a banner which she had worked, and Lady Charlotte Curzon the Royal Banner, both being consecrated by the Rev. Mr. Gresley, the chaplain. The Loyal Leicester Infantry were drawn up in the Market Place on Sunday, September the 14th, and accompanied the Mayor and Aldermen to St. Margaret's Church, and afterwards escorted his worship to his own house. Local patriotism shown in soldiering was never before nor since so demonstrative.

The inclemencies of the winter were aggravated in their effects by a scarcity of food, which occasioned a feeling of deep discontent among the working classes, and led to disturbances in this neighbourhood.

The "Leicester Fencibles" were called on to suppress a riot at Kibworth, arising out of the rescue of two deserters by the men employed on the line of the Union Canal. The news having reached Leicester, on Monday, March the 30th, 1795, the Mayor gave instructions to Captain Heyrick to act in the emergency. The bugle sounded to arms, and in about ten minutes the loyal Leicester troop of Volunteer Cavalry appeared in the Market Place fully armed and accoutred. The loyal Leicester Volunteer Infantry, at this time on parade, being informed of particulars, immediately marched off for Kibworth, with fixed bayonets. The Cavalry rode to Newton Harcourt, where they found a body of the rioters at the Recruiting Sergeant public house, several of them appearing at the

door with long pikes, apparently ready to offer resistance. Four of the most desperate among the rioters were secured, and brought to Leicester; the rest being dispersed.

A subscription was entered into in July, to reduce the price of corn to the poor, and in other ways to diminish the distress consequent on the high price and deficient supplies of wheat. Still, the sufferings among a large class of the inhabitants were very great; and unable to repress their discontent, they foolishly had recourse to violent proceedings. The disturbance began with an insult offered to the Leicester Volunteer Infantry, on their return from exercise. It seems a number of men sheltered themselves behind some houses in Church Gate, for the purpose of throwing stones and missiles of various kinds. The greater part of them were apprehended; but almost immediately after the Infantry had retired, the mob collected in large numbers and broke the windows of several of the inhabitants; and it was not until a late hour that the Cavalry and Infantry restored order. The tumultuous feeling extended to Barrow-on-Soar on the 6th of August. A waggon loaded with corn was stopped there, and conveyed to the church by the populace, who refused to give up the corn. The Rev. Thomas Burnaby proceeded with the Leicester Troop of Cavalry to the scene of disorder, and the Riot Act was read. It was proposed to leave eight quarters of the grain and take away the remainder; but no sooner did the escort move on with the waggon, than they were assailed with brickbats, and shots were fired at them from the adjoining houses. The Cavalry then made a stand, and discharged their carbines at their assailants. Eleven persons fell in consequence—three dead and eight dangerously wounded. The waggon was brought on to Leicester by the Cavalry, with two prisoners.

A profound sensation was created by this event, which was always popularly known afterwards as the "Barrow Butchery."

Owing to the prevalent distress, the Races were not held this year. It was felt to be no time to make holiday, when on two Saturdays in succession not a sample of wheat was exhibited in Leicester Market, and on the third the enormous price of £8 per quarter was asked for the article. While the cry was for "bread," and starvation in gaunt proportions confronted the multitude, it would have been a cruel mockery of human pangs to ask people to enjoy sport on the Race Course.

About two o'clock, on Wednesday morning, the 18th of November, a fire broke out in the dwelling-house of Mr. Billings, clothier, Gallowtree Gate, which extended to the premises of Mr. Phillips, the proprietor of the *Leicester Herald*. The flames spread so rapidly

that scarcely a single article was saved, and the occupants of the houses escaped with difficulty from the conflagration. Both houses were burned down. A subscription was made for Mr. Billings by his friends. Mr. Phillips being insured, was not under the necessity of receiving similar assistance. He was, however, subject to the suspicion, among his political opponents, of having set fire to his own premises—a suspicion which the Fire Office in which he insured did not share, as its officers gave him a cheque, shortly after the fire, for the full amount of injury he had sustained. All his books and papers, with the Permanent Library and contents of his pamphlet-room, were destroyed. He shortly after this date removed to London, where he commenced the *Monthly Magazine*.<sup>k</sup>

At the beginning of the year 1796, an address was circulated by the Committee appointed the previous year for the purpose of administering relief to the poor, showing in what difficulties they had been placed. They stated that they had no sooner received their appointment, than they were assured by persons whose information could not be doubted, that the whole stock of bread-corn and flour in the neighbourhood would be exhausted in a few days, and that their efforts to alleviate distress would be totally in vain, unless they could succeed in immediately procuring wheat, and such other grain as might be mixed with it, and substituted for it, from distant markets. The Committee therefore made very large purchases of grain in places remote from Leicester, securing for the supplies thus obtained a regular and safe conveyance at considerable expense. Not long after, however, the scarcity ceased, owing to a plentiful harvest; and the apprehensions of famine being removed, the Committee had in hand a large quantity of dear corn which they had to dispose of at rates much lower than they had given for it, and which it was found necessary to sell by auction on market-days. In consequence of the unexpected abundance of the supply and the reduction in prices, the Committee had to sustain a loss of about two thousand pounds, which they called on the public to share with them: as it had been incurred in a charitable undertaking. But their appeal (signed by Walter Ruding, Esq., their chairman) was not generally responded to; so that eventually the responsibility, amounting to £1,550, fell upon twenty-three townsmen, who, in the hour of danger, were induced to become sureties for such sums of money as might be advanced for the purchase of corn from distant districts. The county, which had

<sup>k</sup> "In 1807," Mr. Gardiner says in his *Music and Friends*, "The persecuted printer of Leicester was chosen one of the Sheriffs of London. In carrying up a city address to the throne, upon constitutional principles, which he constantly maintained, he received the honours of knighthood from George the Third."

reaped the advantage of the sale of the surplus corn, left the town to scramble out of the difficulty as well as it could; for, as was remarked at the time, by a public journal, "Though few counties contained more gentlemen of large estates and great property, yet the expectations founded on the liberality of those gentlemen proved delusive."

The places of resort which one generation frequents, and associates with many a reminiscence of early life and youthful delight, another entirely forgets, or perhaps never knew. Such scenes of amusement become antiquated, or are superseded by the novelties of some enterprising caterer for public amusement, and then they linger only in the memory of the aged. The "Vauxhall" at Leicester, so long the favourite spot for recreation, thus passed out of public notice this year, when it was offered for sale by auction, as a site suitable for a wharf and warehouses.<sup>1</sup>

Among the political movements of the time was one having for its object the restoration of peace with France. The Reformers or "Jacobins" (as their opponents called them) were its constant advocates. In the month of April the members of that party in Leicester issued a handbill, addressed to the inhabitants, in which they published a copy of a petition to the king, condemning the conduct of his ministers and urging their immediate dismissal, as the only means of saving the Constitution and restoring peace to Europe. All who exerted themselves to promote the success of the petition were recommended to meet in small numbers and separate immediately after signing, in order that all appearance and apprehension of confusion might be avoided. Upon this proceeding the *Leicester Journal* offered a severe comment, observing that "There never was a period that called for the exertion of men of property more than the present." "A desperate faction," it went on to say, "Notoriously partial to French principles, are attempting, as much as possible, to raise a popular clamour for peace, and, at the same moment, try everything in their power to thwart all the measures which alone can tend to secure to us such a peace as the dignity of this country has a right to expect. Yet such men dare hope that the people will contentedly submit to see the national affairs entrusted to their discretion." Within a month or so after the date of this notice, the king had concluded a treaty of peace with the French Republic, and an additional duty on advertisements, and one of three halfpence on newspapers, were laid, to defray the taxation caused by the war—a duty which the Editor of the *Journal* strongly deprecated.

At the close of the month of May, the loyal Leicester Corps of

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Gamble, of Willoughby Waterless, was the proprietor, and Messrs. Harrison and Sheppard were the attorneys employed to negotiate the sale of the premises.

Volunteer Infantry were reviewed by Major Grey, Inspecting Field Officer for Nottingham, and highly complimented on the excellence of their firing, and their state of discipline. At the same period, the commissions in the Provisional Cavalry for the County were announced; when the names were as follows:—Colonel, the Duke of Rutland; Lieutenant Colonel, James Phelps, Esq.; Major, Thomas Boulton, Esq., Tooley; Captains, W. T. Maior, Esq., Harborough, P. A. Lafargue, Esq., J. Foster, Esq.; Lieutenants, E. Maior Stokes, Esq., Melton, J. Neale, Esq., Skeffington, J. Goode, Esq., Normanton, and J. Price, Esq.

The lovers of literature are familiar with the name Heyrick as that of one of our best lyrical poets, and the inhabitants of this district recognize it as that of a family for ages identified with the town and county of Leicester. At the close of the last century it was borne by a gentleman who played a very considerable figure in the society of this town. Under the name of "Lionel," the late Mr. Gardiner, in the third volume of his *Music and Friends*, has minutely described his appearance. "I remember well the coat of the gay Lionel," said the author, "was a light grey mixture, approaching to white, with a black silk collar and silver cord buttons; black satin small clothes, with sky blue ribbed silk stockings, that showed a handsome leg. At the knee band was a small diamond buckle, and a more large and costly one ornamented the toe of the shoe. Rich lace ruffles set off the hand, and a cocked hat surmounted a head of hair dressed in the height of the French fashion." Mr. John Heyrick, jun. (for his father John Heyrick, Esq., was then living) was designated the Apollo of the town; being "a high-born gentleman of engaging manners." He married a daughter of John Coltman, Esq., a manufacturer whose scholastic attainments had secured for him the name of "Hebrew John;" but the union proved unhappy for both parties, and they soon separated. Mr. Heyrick had held a commission in one of the Volunteer corps, which he gave up in order to enter the King's Own Regiment of Light Dragoons. His service in this was, however, brief, as he was seized with illness, and died suddenly at his father's house, when only thirty-five years of age. His abilities as a scholar and his demeanour as a gentleman had ensured for him a considerable reputation; the former being exemplified in a volume of poems, published shortly after his decease, under the title "First Flights." The widow of Mr. Heyrick long survived him, and became known in connection with the anti-slavery cause as the zealous advocate of immediate emancipation.

The local annals of this year were also associated with the name of a character of another description, once the terror of the pathways

and highways of this and neighbouring counties—a kind of Dick Turpin of Leicestershire. For many years this man (we speak of George Davenport) led a life of lawless and reckless, but neither cruel nor altogether hardened profligacy. He was born at Great Wigston about the middle of the last century, and was brought up as a stocking-maker. The companionship of an old and incorrigible offender influenced Davenport to leave the ways of honesty and industry to enter on the downward paths of vice and crime. Being of a sociable, adventurous, light-hearted nature, he was a great favourite with the working classes everywhere; for he never plundered them, but sometimes gave them a share of his booty. Like Robin Hood, in fact, he “robbed the rich to give to the poor.” Being of a good figure, well-made for a soldier, he often deceived the recruiting-officers. When asked to enlist, he took the “smart,” went to the public-house to carouse, and, as he sang a good song and told a capital story, he was an immense favourite in every convivial party; and while drinking temperately himself, contrived to intoxicate the sergeant. Early in the morning, when the latter was sleeping off the fumes of the previous evening’s debauch, Davenport would awake, steal down stairs quietly, escape from his quarters, take a horse out of the nearest field, and ride away with it for twenty miles (turning it up when he had gone thus far); so that later in the morning, when the sergeant sought out his recruit, he was away in another county. Or it might be that he and his companions would, on other occasions, throw a rope across a high road leading from Leicester, on the Saturday evenings, which would bring to a halt one or two farmers riding home from market with their purses well laden, who found the muzzle of a horse-pistol abruptly thrust close to their heads with a command to “stand and deliver.” The belief that it was George Davenport and his gang who stopped the way, ensured an instant surrender. Warrants were out against him in every direction; but the village constables were unable to capture him. If he were drinking at the Bull’s Head Inn, Belgrave, and the officers of justice thought they were certain to take him, in a moment he had fled, and had scaled the high wall opposite with cat-like agility. If a party of dragoons rode over to Wigston, to secure him as a deserter, and caught sight of him, in an instant he was running down the narrow lanes, his intended captors after him, their carbines flashing one after another at the fugitive; but he escaped by leaping walls and rushing through hedges, defying pursuit. If the parish constable knowing he was at home went to his house, and forced open his door, Davenport had meanwhile climbed up the wide chimney, and by dropping upon the roof

and down the walls, evaded all possibility of apprehension. But the dexterous and daring footpad knew that in the end the long arm of the law would reach him : his acquaintances often told him so ; and one of them (the landlord of the Three Cranes) said he knew he should see George Davenport hanged some day. This person kept a chaise (the first introduced into Leicester) for hire. The reply of Davenport was characteristic : " Well, then, B——, when I go to be hanged, I shall ride to the gallows in your chaise." " Done, George, it's a bargain" was the rejoinder. On another occasion, Davenport was drinking at a public house in Syston ; he was showily dressed, his waistcoat being remarkably fine with embroidery. Among the company present was Woolridge, then the regular hangman. " Aye, George," he said, " I shall have that smart waistcoat some day," alluding to the custom which allowed the executioner to appropriate all a malefactor's clothing in which he was hanged, *outside the shroud*. " You shall not," replied Davenport with an oath, and a secret resolve to cheat the hangman. But the unhappy man's own forebodings were fulfilled. One day he stopped a country butcher on the highway, and found in him an antagonist he had not expected to encounter. The butcher belaboured the footpad with his cudgel so lustily that he mastered him and made him prisoner. At the Assizes held on the 10th of August, 1797, Davenport was tried for the robbery, convicted, and sentenced to death. From his own confession he had been a highwayman for eighteen years, and had deserted from different regiments forty times. The interval elapsing between his trial and execution was passed by the criminal in a manner which proved him not to have lived without compunction, and not to be about to die without sincere repentance. While in prison he reminded the chaise proprietor of his promise, and he was accordingly allowed to have the use of the vehicle to carry him to the gallows at Red Hill. At the same time, he did not forget his declaration to the hangman ; so he asked for the shroud in which his body was to be buried, and this being handed to him, he drew it *over his clothes* (including his fine waistcoat), and thus there was *nothing left outside the shroud*, and nothing, therefore, for the executioner ! The remainder of the story we copy from the *Leicester Journal* : " His deportment, on the morning of his fatal exit, was manly and decisive ; nor did his fortitude for a moment forsake him. Dressed in his shroud, and surrounded with all the paraphernalia of death and judgment, he acquitted himself as a humble and penitent sinner, looking anxiously forward towards another world for that consolation which his devotional exercises had given him reason to expect. He fully acknowledged the justness of his sentence, as well



as the crime for which he suffered. After remaining some time in prayer, he dropped the fatal signal and was launched into eternity about one o'clock. He went to the gallows in a post-chaise, accompanied by his brother, and after hanging the usual time was taken to Wigston, the place of his nativity, and decently interred among his relatives. He was thirty-nine years of age, very personable, and extremely well made, and possessed more than a mediocrity of natural abilities."

## CHAPTER XIX.

ADMIRAL DUNCAN'S VICTORY—SUBSCRIPTION FUND TO CARRY ON WAR—  
ARREST OF MR. PARES THE PRINTER—MEETING FOR NATIONAL DEFENCE  
—THE LEICESTER MILITIA OFFER TO MARCH TO IRELAND—AN ASYLUM  
FOR GIRLS—THE DUKE OF RUTLAND'S ADDRESS TO THE MILITIA—  
OPENING OF A CATHOLIC CHAPEL—A LOCAL TRADITION—AN ESCAPE  
FROM THE GALLOWES—SCARCITY OF BREAD—THE ERECTION OF THE  
ASSEMBLY ROOMS.

ALL England rang with acclamations on receipt of the news of Admiral Duncan's great victory over the Dutch fleet, on the 11th of October, 1797, obtained in an action fought off the coast of Holland. When confirmation of the intelligence reached Leicester, the mass of the inhabitants manifested their joy with every variety of demonstration; for it was thought that thus the great maritime ally of France was effectually crushed. An entertainment was provided at the Three Crowns, when Mr. Mayor, attended by Wm. Pochin, Esq., member for the county, G. A. L. Keck, Esq., C. Winstanley, Esq., James Phelp, Esq., Major Gillon, and the officers of the Royal Regiment of Scots Greys, passed the day with the utmost conviviality; and in the evening the whole town was illuminated. The Leicester Infantry assembled in the Market Place, and paraded the principal streets with their band, firing volleys at intervals, to demonstrate their exultation.

The Government of France being still unsettled (although the Reign of Terror had passed away), and being assailed by the Royalists

on one hand and the Jacobins on the other, fostered the national love of martial glory by undertaking the subjugation of Switzerland, and permitting an expedition to the East under Napoleon Buonaparte. After the peace of Campo Formio the French had no formidable enemy to encounter: therefore, all throughout the winter, had been preparing for an invasion of England. Their transports in large numbers were afloat in the Channel, and troops were assembled on the opposite coast; and, in consequence, the British Government took the most active and energetic measures to prepare for the emergency—this island never, either before or since, having been placed in such a formidable position of defence. Early in February, 1798, the proprietors of the Bank of England subscribed £200,000 to the fund raised by voluntary subscription for the support of the war, and this was the commencement of a national movement. In Leicester it was begun early in March. The Corporation contributed to the fund £525, the Mayor £21, the Mansfields (father and son) £50 each, Messrs. Bentley and Buxton £50, Messrs. Gregory and Price £25, and others in like proportion—servant men and maids, school-boys, and children, giving their mites to the object. The Committee issued an earnest appeal to the public to come forward, irrespective of party, to swell the list, and thus testify to the universality of the patriotic resolve of the people to help, in person or purse, to repel the invader. John Vaughan, Esq., Barrister-at-Law (son of Dr. Vaughan), who was unanimously elected Recorder of the Borough, early in the year, in an inaugural address to the Grand Jury of the Borough fanned the flame of loyalty and patriotism, averring that this country was at issue with its enemy, “on this awful point—whether at last we are to have any laws, any morals, or any religion at all. They are all,” continued the Recorder, “embarked in one common danger, and must stand or fall together.”

At this time, suspicion fell upon every person professing Liberalism that he was in disguise an ally of the French Republicans. A Mr. Pares (no relative of the well-known family of that name), a printer, living in Belgrave Gate, was apprehended on April the 25th, by a king's messenger, on suspicion of treasonable practices, and the next morning sent to London. His house was searched, and all his papers seized. A tinman named Gilbert was also immured in the Borough Gaol, and other persons left the town to avoid capture. These were called “Radical Reformers” for the first time, this year; they accepted the term supplied them by the Tory Minister Pitt, who accused the Opposition of an intention to obstruct the supplies till “they had obtained a *Radical Reform* in Parliament to an indefinite extent.”

On the 18th of May a general meeting of the inhabitants was convened by the Magistrates to take into consideration the act of Mr. Dundas, relating to the defence of the country and the protection of the town in case of invasion. The business was opened by the Mayor (Mr. Jeffeutt), a committee was appointed, and several resolutions adopted. The latter showed how imminent everybody believed the peril to be—the first of them affirming that as the Volunteer Corps already in the place had so honourably offered to extend their services beyond the limits of their engagement, it was possible the town might be left without any military provision at a time when it might most stand in need of it; and the second urging that an armed association be immediately established for the preservation of the peace in Leicester, and within five miles of the town—the members holding themselves ready at all times to act under the direction of the Commanding Officer for the time being at the town, or within five miles of it, but not undertaking to act in a military capacity beyond that limit. The inhabitants of the villages, within the distance, were to be invited to join the association, and regulations for the choice of officers and the management of the corps were agreed upon. The members of the association were to serve without pay, and find their own uniform, but the Government was to be applied to for arms. During the discussion on the resolutions, it was suggested that it would more effectually conduce to the service of the country if the Volunteer Corps already established were augmented; though it was admitted, at the same time, that the infantry of the town in particular had been “very ill-supported.” Mr. Alderman Dabbs was of opinion, if proper provisions were made for that loyal and respectable Corps, that their number would soon increase to five hundred, and he had no doubt, from the high spirit and loyalty manifested in the Hall, there were many present who were anxious to add their services—a remark which was received with loud applause. A considerable number instantly adjourned to another room and enrolled themselves. The Committee appointed was composed of the following gentlemen:—Mr. Mayor, Mr. Winstanley, Mr. Alderman Dabbs, Mr. Thomas Pares, Mr. Alderman Clark, Dr. Arnold, Mr. W. Walker, Mr. John Pares, Mr. J. King, Dr. T. G. Arnold, Mr. W. Heyrick, Mr. Stockdale, Mr. R. Stephens, Mr. Alderman Mansfield, Mr. H. Wood, Mr. Thomas Buxton, Mr. Peake, Mr. Lowdham, Captain Farmer, Mr. Barratt, and Mr. T. Wood. This proceeding does not seem to have terminated in any marked result; but considerable additions were subsequently made to the Volunteer Corps.

In Ireland, the discontents of the people had increased to such a

magnitude that they formed plans like those of the Fenians of our own day for the expulsion of the English and the overthrow of their authority. The Lord-Lieutenant had recourse to frightful acts of torture to extort confessions from various persons; but the schemes of the malcontents were thereby discovered. The cruelty shown, and the knowledge that their designs were known, determined them to appeal to arms, and they resolved upon a general insurrection. In May they attacked several towns, and obtained possession of Wexford and Enniscorthy. On the 19th of June, several Militia regiments having volunteered to serve in Ireland, a bill was introduced into Parliament, empowering the King to accept the offer of such regiments, and it was ultimately carried. The Leicestershire Militia were not behind their fellows elsewhere in patriotic manifestations, as the following letter, sent from its non-commissioned officers and privates, attests :

“ Yaxley Barracks, June 16, 1798.

“ Sir,

“ We, the non-commissioned officers and privates of the Leicestershire Regiment of Militia, commanded by Colonel His Grace the Duke of Rutland, being desirous of showing our attachment and loyalty to our King and country, do hereby volunteer our services to march immediately for Ireland; and we desire our Sergeant-Major to lay our request before Lieutenant-Colonel Cheselden as the sense of the whole, requesting him to transmit the same to Colonel His Grace the Duke of Rutland. Signed in behalf, and at the request of the whole of the non-commissioned officers and privates.

“ ALEX. DUDGEON, Sergeant-Major.

“ To Lieutenant-Colonel Cheselden,  
Norman Cross Barracks.”

On Wednesday morning, the 5th of September, 550 of the Militia having marched from Norman Cross to Leicester, set out hence on their route to Ireland. They only rested two hours in the town, and then marched forward with thirty-six waggons and two pieces of artillery (six-pounders). At the moment of departure the men were surrounded by wives, brothers, sisters, sweethearts, and children; and there was a bitter parting for many, but the fire of patriotism burned in their hearts, and the sacrifice of domestic and social affections was held to be a duty. For the time, it cannot be doubted, the people of all ranks and parties were inspired with a noble sentiment, which raised them above their ordinary selves, and united them in the sacred bonds of national affection. The Duke of Rutland, then in his twentieth year, arrived in time to join his regiment. One half of it took Coventry in its way, to form a

junction at Chester with the other portion. When they reached Chester, they were drawn up on the Rood Eye, where they were informed by their Colonel that the object of their assembling was to give those who wished an opportunity of volunteering to serve in Ireland. More than half of the division at once stepped forward; the remainder being immediately marched off to Holyhead, about eighteen miles distant. On Saturday morning, the 15th, the volunteers, to the number of 1000, went on board the transports in high spirits, and full of military ardour. When the men who refused to volunteer, marched through this town on their way back to Yaxley Barracks, the women did not fail to mark their sense of the conduct of the defaulters, by hissing and hooting at them as they passed through the streets; thus showing the contempt and indignation they felt in regard to the stay-at-home warriors.

Amid the din of military preparations, the claims of benevolence were not forgotten by the ladies of Leicester; some of whom, early in September, established an Asylum for young girls who were in a neglected and destitute situation. The principal object was to train them for domestic service, under the management of a prudent, diligent woman. Among the promoters of the Society were Mrs. Pares, Mrs. Paget (Scraptoft), Mrs. John Heyrick, sen., Mrs. John Heyrick, Mrs. S. Coltman, Miss Anne Coltman, Mrs. Jas. Bankart, Mrs. Miles, Miss Miles, Mrs. Garle, Mrs. J. Buxton, Mrs. W. Ludlow, Mr. Paget (surgeon), Mr. Coleman (Birstall), and others whose names are no longer known in Leicester.

The successes of British seamen this year enkindled a feeling of enthusiasm throughout the country which, in the present day, can only be imagined. The threats of the French to subjugate the English people, and annex this island as a dependency to the Republic, had aroused a passion for arms among the people unusual to their temper, and hence in Leicester there was scarcely a healthy youth among the middle and working classes who was not serving or had not served among the Volunteers or in the Militia. The whole people rose to arms. At this exciting period, the news of Nelson's great victory off the mouth of the Nile spread like a flame of living fire over the land; warming the people into a fever of defiance and hatred of their neighbours across the Channel, and imparting to them an exultant feeling probably never before experienced. In Leicester, the inhabitants were wild with joy and triumph. It was quite possible at such a time for the young Duke of Rutland to speak as follows, when he addressed the Leicestershire Militia in Ireland, on the 2nd of December:—

“When Ireland was proclaimed in danger, the Leicestershire regiment, which it is my pride to boast I have the honour to command, was one of the

first to volunteer its services in her defence. The act was your own ; myself and the other officers of the regiment only followed your wishes :— all the merit is yours. You have been received with gratitude, and although it has not been in the nature of things possible, in a time of trouble like the present, to provide at so short a notice all the comforts and accommodation for you which it is intended, and to which you are so justly entitled : yet you have the satisfaction to see, that the universal voice of the kingdom resounds in expressions of thanks and gratitude, and that they consider you as one of the principal instruments in the safety and peace of the country. It surely must be needless for me to add, that whilst any danger exists, I trust the Leicestershire regiment will not be disposed to quit their post.

“ You are now called upon, in your King’s name, to continue for a time the exertion of those services which have been essentially useful. You have heard from the highest authority the present distracted state of many parts of this kingdom. You have heard that we are again threatened with an invasion by the common enemy of mankind ; I hope, therefore, you will empower me to inform his Majesty, that in a trying crisis like the present, he may depend upon the Leicestershire regiment, and that you are disposed to continue your services in this kingdom a little time longer.

“ As for myself, it is well known by every one here, that indispensable business will shortly oblige me to leave you ; but I pledge my word and honour, as a soldier, and as a man, that if I am alive, I will return to my brave fellow-soldiers in Ireland, which I think will be at the end of a very few weeks ; if after this public declaration of my sentiments, any soldier in the regiment shall still desire to leave me, I promise that he shall not be prevented.

“ This is my opinion, which I have committed to writing, as the record of those sentiments from which I will never depart.”

In 1799 very few incidents occurred in Leicester worthy of notice in this chapter. It was a year noted in European history ; but in the quiet country towns of England, enjoying the security afforded by insular position and a powerful Government, nothing noticeable happened. The news of foreign battles was heard month after month, and the reports of bloody struggles between Russ and Gaul and Teuton, in Italy and Switzerland, frequently reached this town ; but within its precincts the flow of life was even and regular. Beyond the periodical musters of volunteers and militiamen, and regular-recurring Corporation festivals and popular holidays, there was little to record. Perhaps the only subject worthy of mention, in connection with this year, is the reintroduction, for the first time after the Reformation, of the Catholic worship in Leicester. A chapel having been erected in the neighbourhood of Causeway Lane, it was opened on Sunday, October the 13th, when the Rev. Mr. Sharpe of Coventry delivered a discourse to a numerous congregation.

The afternoon service was conducted by the appointed priest, the Rev. H. Chappell.

One or two remarkable events took place in 1800 which are entitled to mention. The first of these has become a local tradition. At this date, a physician named Alexander was residing at Stonygate. One Saturday evening in April, about nine o'clock, he was on his road to Leicester, midway between his residence and the turnpike-gate, when he was stopped by four footpads. They discharged two pistols at him, and attempted to discharge a third, which flashed in the pan. They then struck him, and took from him his watch and some silver, and prevented him walking on to Leicester. As three of the men wore caps and regimental cloaks, and a fourth was in the stable-dress of a horse-soldier, suspicion fell upon four privates in a regiment of Light Dragoons then quartered in the town, as likely to prove the culprits. A woman who had seen in their hands a watch, which she had noticed in Dr. Alexander's possession when he attended her husband, gave information of the fact to the magistrates, and accordingly the four men were apprehended, and underwent a strict examination. Three of them were liberated; but a fourth, James Murray (in whose possession the watch was found), was committed to gaol.

He was tried at the Summer Assizes, convicted, and sentenced to be hanged on Wednesday, August the 20th. While lying under sentence of death in the County Gaol (now used as the Gaol for the Borough), his conduct being uniformly good and decorous, he disarmed the vigilance of the turnkeys, who do not seem to have thought he needed close watching. The prisoner awaited his opportunity to escape. Soon after six o'clock, on the Saturday morning previous to the day on which his execution was fixed to take place, he knocked at the door of his cell, desiring permission to go to another part of the prison. The turnkey accordingly admitted him into the felon's-yard with that view, and having no idea of his intention to escape, left him there alone. Murray immediately, with the assistance of a stool placed on the top of the pump, jumped to a window above, thence to a spout, and thence to the roof of the building—making springs of several feet in his efforts to grasp at projecting parts, and incurring the risk of being dashed to pieces in case of failure in any one of his efforts. From the roof he descended into the yard of a house outside the Gaol; and the servant having gone out to milk her master's cows, and having left the key under the street-door, the road was so far clear for the fugitive. He walked down the High Street with great self-possession, and passed three or four persons who recognised him, but who, in the moment of surprise, allowed him to

pass unobstructed. He was manacled, and when he had turned from the High Street into the Swines Market, the chains attached to him were observed; but it was singularly enough supposed he had been sent upon an errand and was returning to the prison. Meanwhile, one person who saw him in High Street told the gaoler (Mr. Simons) of the circumstance, and he instantly raised an alarm and instituted enquiries for his discovery. Murray made his way by the back streets to the outskirts of the town, and he fled, not knowing whither, until he reached the village of Peckleton, where he took refuge in an outhouse. While there, a party of boys found him concealed, and he offered them a shilling to bring the blacksmith to knock off his irons. Fearing the alarm his appearance would create, he hid himself in some standing corn when the boys left him on their errand. As he had expected, they spread the intelligence of a man in fetters having been discovered, and a crowd of villagers hurried to the spot to see the strange spectacle. He heard them return; and, exhausted with his exertions, panting from loss of breath, and in despair of eluding apprehension among so many foes (as he thought the villagers would prove to be) he came forward, saying that since death was certain, he would surrender to them without offering any resistance. But the people of Peckleton were smitten with compassion for the runaway malefactor; instead of seizing upon him, with stern purpose to carry him back to the gallows (from which it may be said he had escaped), they struck off his chains, gave him food, provided him with a change of dress and money, and speeded him on his flight from ignominy and death. It only remains to be said he escaped, and was never heard of again.

An attempt to shoot the King from the pit of Drury Lane Theatre was made by a maniac named Hadfield on the 15th of May. A feeling of horror and indignation was created everywhere in consequence. In Leicester, a meeting of the inhabitants was called to congratulate the King on his preservation from the hand of an assassin, and an address was agreed upon to be presented to his Majesty by the Borough Members.

A great scarcity of bread and corn existed during 1799, which continued during the year following. It was now considered an offence to buy up wheat for the purpose of selling it again; the practice being called "regrating." An announcement was made by the Borough Magistrates of their intention to suppress it; and, in order to keep down prices, the principal farmers attending Leicester market published their intention not to demand more than five pounds per quarter for their wheat, and recommended others to follow their example! On the first Saturday in September



a riot took place in the Market Place, which might have been attended with serious consequences, had not the Riot Act been promptly read, and a party of dragoons under Major Teesdale been on the spot. A meeting of noblemen and gentlemen, with the Duke of Rutland in the chair, was held in the middle of September, to take into consideration the means of alleviating the existing distress, and resolutions were passed with that view. The farmers were by them exhorted to bring to market proper and regular supplies of wheat, barley, and other grain; and to thresh out their barley got in without damage and sell it to their poorer neighbours, for the purpose of converting it into bread. Other suggestions were thrown out of a similar nature. The *Leicester Journal* attributed the popular discontent to the spread of Jacobinism, saying, "an artificial scarcity of wheat was one of the instruments employed by the French revolutionists to overthrow their lawful government," and so forth.

An addition was made to the public buildings in Leicester, in the previous year, which was opened for public purposes in 1800. This was the new Assembly Rooms in Hotel Street. It was erected by a proprietary, who found some difficulty in raising the necessary funds. They met in August, John Peach Hungerford, Esq., in the chair; there being present Sir John Palmer, Sir E. C. Hartopp, G. A. L. Keck, Esq., C. Winstanley, Esq., Edward Dawson, Esq., T. Pares, Esq., J. Pares, Esq., Mr. J. Farmer, Mr. Mansfield, Mr. J. King, Mr. Willows, Mr. Johnson, and Mr. E. Harrison. It appeared £3,300 was required to complete the Hotel and Assembly Rooms (as the structure was called) and to finish its details and outbuilding. It was resolved, "That such sum be raised by mortgage of the whole of the said buildings, in shares of £100 each, by the proprietors, and that an advertisement be inserted in the *Leicester Journal*, stating that the sum of £2,500 is already offered, and requesting the names of such others of the proprietors who may be willing to advance one hundred pounds to make up the above sum; and further stating, that unless the whole of the said sum of £3,300 be raised, in the course of a month, the whole of the property must be sold." It was also resolved, "That a subscription be entered into for furnishing the public rooms, in order to their being opened at the ensuing races; and that the ladies and gentlemen of the county and town be requested to contribute for such purpose." A general meeting of the proprietors was fixed for the 8th of September. Lists of subscribers to the loan, of £100 each, and the furnishing fund, were published. The names of the lenders were the Duke of Rutland, the Earl of Stamford, Lord Ranelagh, Sir J. Palmer, Sir E. C. Hartopp, J. P. Hungerford, G. A. L. Keck,

C. Winstanley, E. Dawson, S. Smith, C. J. Packe, T. Paget, J. King, R. Stephens, J. Mansfield, J. Farmer, J. Willows, E. Harrison, jun., J. Johnson, T. Miller, J. E. Carter, T. B. Buxton, and David Harris. As the Race Balls were advertised to take place in the New Assembly Rooms, it is to be inferred the money had been raised in the interim, to ensure the appropriation of the building to its intended purpose.

With the notice of these circumstances, the annals of Leicester in the Eighteenth Century close; but I have added chapters which seemed to be called for, in order to complete the knowledge of our local history up to the year 1800. One of these traces the origin and growth of the Town Property, another the Parliamentary Representation, another the Hosiery Manufacture, and another the Religious Denominations during the Eighteenth Century.

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## CHAPTER XX.

### ORIGIN AND GROWTH OF THE TOWN PROPERTY.

IN its corporate capacity, the town possessed property to a very limited extent, and collected but a very small income, in the middle of the thirteenth century. At first, its accounts were so unimportant that the items were loosely entered upon a Guild roll by the Mayor's clerk, the Mayor keeping the purse, which literally held all that was received from all sources. In the year 1257, this total was derived from the payments of new members entering the Guild, and from the rental of one house which belonged to the borough: the items being respectively 31s. 8d. and 19d., altogether 33s. 3d. Between forty and fifty years after, the person (not the Mayor) to whom the treasurership was entrusted gave an account of his receipts and expenses: they were, for the year 1297, respectively £7 16s. 7d. and £8 10s. 8d. In 1298, they were £10 3s. 2d. and £10 2s. 9d. In 1299, they were £8 9s. 8d. and £14 2s. 8d.—the balance being due by the Guild to Adam of Braunston, the treasurer. In the year 1318, the expenses had

increased to £31 11s. 5d., exceeding the receipts by 4s. 11d. At this time, Hugh the town sergeant and the Mayor's clerk received each half a mark (6s. 8d.) yearly for their services. When, however, the town-income improved (as it did in the reigns of Edward the Second and Edward the Third) the Mayor was allowed to hold an annual feast, which generally followed upon the presentation of the Mayor in the Earl's court, held in the Castle, in recognition of the Earl's feudal authority over the townsmen. At this feast the Earl's steward was entertained as the principal guest. In the year 1360 the Mayor was allowed 40s. for his feast, 13s. 4d. for salmon, 40s. for his clerk's table, and 13s. 4d. for his clerk's and sergeant's fees. Five years after, an additional 10s. 6d. yearly was allowed to the Mayor. In 1376, £6 was paid to William Taillard, the Mayor, to include the expenses of his feast, and the remuneration of his clerk and servant.<sup>m</sup>

An additional cause of augmented income, probably, was a fresh arrangement entered into by the burgesses with Henry, Duke of Lancaster,<sup>n</sup> in relation to the town-tolls. It seems that in the year of his decease, the burgesses made a contract with him to convey to him and his heirs the manor of Wrangle in Lincolnshire, upon condition that he should release the inhabitants of the town, and strangers visiting its markets and fairs, from tolls, stallages, and pickage.

The property of the town in the middle of the fourteenth century consisted of a tenement at the West Gate, a chamber over the East Gate, and a place near the South Gate—the gates being, in truth, in the possession of the Mayor and Burgesses; but in the last quarter of the century they acquired property at Whetstone, which raised the amount of rental from about 9s. yearly to 27s. 3d. yearly. In Richard the Second's reign the yearly receipts had grown under these heads to nearly £6, namely, 36s. from rents in Leicester and £4 1s. from rents in Whetstone. In addition to this, about the same time the Duke of Lancaster made a transfer of nearly all the payments he levied by his bailiffs upon the townsmen, and all the sums they collected usually under the names of ancient customs, to the Mayor and Burgesses, for a yearly payment to him in gross of £20. These payments and levies were those which accrued in the bailiwick of the town, suburbs, and fields of Leicester, with all executions and other profits; the profits of the portmote courts, of the fairs, markets, and all other courts, rents, farms, goods, and chattels; of fugitives, felons, forfeitures of waste, deodands, and treasure trove, with the keeping of all manner of prisoners. The Duke excepted from the bargain the Castle of

<sup>m</sup> These items are taken from Guild Rolls and Compotuses preserved among the Borough Records.

<sup>n</sup> The Nephew of Thomas, Earl of Lancaster.

Leicester, the mill near it, the rents and services levied by the Castle porter, and the court of the Castle. In this way, also, the townspeople were relieved of the exactions and always officious interference of the Earl's bailiffs, and probably realized by the contract a considerable surplus for the common advantage; while the ancient baronial connection of the lords with the townspeople was thus reduced to a mere shadow—to the occasional visits of John of Gaunt in the Castle, and an annual contribution by the burgesses of a round sum to his exchequer.

But another consequence was, that the Mayor and Town Council and townspeople felt it necessary formally to institute a new class of borough functionaries, named Town Chamberlains, upon whom devolved very important duties. The event is recorded in a parchment record still extant, which states that the Mayor (Henry of Clipston), the bailiffs (John Norman and Richard Martyn), the jurors (that is, the Town Council), and the community, being assembled in the Guildhall, on the Friday after the feast of St. Denis the Martyr, in the third year of Richard the Second, made certain ordinances, to be observed for ever, under the forms then recited. First, the Mayor was not in future to be held accountable for the town moneys: he was to be paid ten pounds of silver yearly, on three days stated, of which 40s. was to be allowed for his feast, 40s. for the wages of his sergeant, 20s. for his clerk, and the remainder for his charges and expenses. Secondly, it was ordained that if any costs should be incurred "on account of our lord the King, the lord of the town, or any other lord or lady whatsoever, or any other man, in the name of the said town, that the said expenses should be ordered by the Mayor for the time being, the Mayor with the jurors and twenty-four of the commons, or by the whole of the community." Thirdly, it was ordained that the two Chamberlains, annually chosen, should repair, maintain, and mend, the gates, walls, ditches, pavements, and houses belonging to the town, on view of the Mayor for the time being, and at the expense of the whole community. Fourthly, it was ordained that the two Chamberlains should annually collect all rents and other payments belonging to the community and to the Merchant Guild, and render their accounts yearly before the Mayor and certain auditors, to be chosen by the Town Council and community. And, fifthly, it was ordained that the Chamberlains should receive yearly 40s. of silver from the town, to be paid to them on three certain days, every year, for their services.

Occasionally, a public-spirited townsman (who, perhaps, had no surviving relatives) made a gift to the town of some property which he had accumulated in the course of his life by the prosecution of trade,

and thus enriched the place in which he had prospered. At this time, also, there was a legal difficulty in the way of property being held by public bodies like the Mayor and Burgesses; so that if the community were rich enough to purchase lands and tenements it could not do so directly. The case was met probably by a fictitious proceeding, in which the conveyance was made to assume the form of a gift. In the month of September, 1392, William Mercer and William Spencer gave to the Mayor and Burgesses lands and tenements in Leicester, Whetstone, and Great Glen, towards the amendment and reparation of the six bridges within the town of Leicester, and for other charges within the said town arising. Before this donation became valid, however, an inquiry took place to ascertain how far the interests of the Crown would be affected by the transfer; and the result was, that in consideration of a payment of £20 to the King he granted his license to his "beloved Mayor and Community" that William Mercer and William Spencer might assign to them, to hold for themselves and successors the property in question. In the report made by the jurors who instituted the inquisition they described the property to be eight messuages, fifteen cottages, two shops, one toft, six virgates and nine acres of land, six acres and one rood of meadow, and twenty-five shillings and ninepence and one farthing rent, and the rent of a cock and two hens in Leicester, Whetstone, and Great Glen; the greater part of the houses and land being situate in Whetstone. Whether this conveyance was a gift in pure benevolence, or an arrangement made to overcome legal objections, does not appear; but the town thus obtained a very considerable addition to its revenue.

Within seventy years of the date of this example of public spirit, John Frysley entered the court of Portmanmote—which would be better known to the legal antiquary as the "Court Leet"—and there, in presence of John Reynolds, the Mayor, and his brethren, made a solemn declaration of his conviction concerning the instability of human affairs; of the reverence and regard he entertained for the local authorities; and of the uncertainty attendant on the ministration by executors of man's affairs after his decease. Following upon which, he there and then granted to the Mayoralty certain rents and tenements, on condition that the mayors of Leicester, in succession and perpetually, should find a priest to sing masses for the souls of his wife, his father, his mother, and of the Mayor and his brethren at that time, and of all their successors, in the church where he (the testator) would be buried. The example of Frysley was contagious. Three years after (1461) John Reynolds (who had been mayor four times) gave to the mayoralty, from a feeling of "goodly

zeal" which he entertained for the "honourable and worshipful office" he had held, a house near the High Cross, to be held under the same conditions as those connected with the donation of John Frysley. Very probably, the Church allowed no merely secular bequests to be made, and therefore the religious service was imperatively associated with the civic benefaction. The house given to the mayors in succession appears to have been intended for a mayor's residence, like the Mansion House in London.

By royal grants and by private bequests the town became, in its corporate capacity, well endowed with income and property. It is on record that in the mayoralty of John Reynolds (1478) there were in Whetstone, belonging to the borough,  $354\frac{1}{2}$  acres of land, ten messuages, and other tenements, which brought in yearly £4 5s. 10d. Among the tenants of the town was Lord Hastings. Thomas Bodicoat also held by knight's service. The Mayor and Chamberlain held their Manorial Court in the village, and their tenants therein did them suit and service.

Many expedients were resorted to by the Corporation to raise funds, in order to meet the various demands made upon them by the state, and the municipal obligations in which they were involved, in the middle of the reign of Elizabeth. The town was then very poor. The Earl of Huntingdon rendered assistance to the Corporation in the year 1584 by giving them £100, which he desired to see employed in various ways; as, for example, in continuing the cloth manufacture, in purchasing coals wholesale and selling them to the poor at the same rate, and in maintaining the preacher and the schoolmaster. But a new charge was now laid upon the town by the county magistrates—the charge of keeping post-horses for the queen's use—to which the Corporation demurred; requesting the earl (through Mr. Robert Heyrick, the Mayor) to procure their exemption from it, particularly assigning as reasons for so doing the fact of the pastures round the town being in the hands of certain gentlemen who would not let them at any reasonable rent, and of the queen making no allowance for the service rendered.

It was therefore imperative that the town income should be increased, in some way or other. There seemed no way of effecting this purpose so feasible, as that of procuring for the public advantage a portion of the property of the dissolved religious houses, which then lay in the town itself and in the suburbs. There were houses scattered about the place which, in dying, the devotees of earlier times had bequeathed to the guilds and the churches and the monasteries; there were portions of land in the adjoining fields which had in a similar manner been transferred to the monks and

priests;—all in the hope that the prayers said by those persons would be effectual in releasing from purgatory the souls of the testators. But on the establishment of the Reformation, prayers for the dead were no longer offered up; they were condemned as superstitious; and the property which had been left to remunerate the clergy for their supposed services, was transferred in the first instance to the Crown. And perhaps there was a rough equity in the ultimate return of this property to the descendants of the townsmen who had originally possessed it, to be used in promoting and sustaining objects of secular utility.

Principal among these possessions, formerly, was the Grange Farm, now known as the South Fields, near this town. In the Catholic times it was the property of the College of St. Mary in the Newarke; having been conferred upon that institution by the founder. Near to the church was the Grange itself, in which was stored the corn, the produce of the estate, entrusted to the care of the Granger; and the locality is indicated even in the present day, in the designation of the street lying near to the site of the building, known as Grange Lane.

At a Common Hall held on the 23rd of April, 1585, five of the Twenty Four and five of the Forty Eight—thus constituted a committee of ten—were empowered to act for a year in the sale or exchange of any lands, tenements, woods, and so forth, belonging to the Corporation, and to buy or take on lease any others of which they might consider the purchase or leasing expedient. They made arrangements for the purchase of the Grange Farm for the town, and of a reversion of one moiety in it procured by Mr. Francis Hastings from the queen for himself. The cost of the moiety was £600; towards which amount it is worthy of notice two townsmen (Mr. Robert Heyrick and Mr. Thomas Clarke) jointly contributed £160.

By writ under the seal of her Duchy of Lancaster, dated July the 30th, 1587, the queen empowered Francis Hastings, Esq., Edward Stanhope, Esq., (one of the surveyors of the Duchy), William Agard, Esq. (receiver of the Honour of Tutbury), Francis Beaumont, Esq., George Purefey, Esq., and Roger Bromley, Esq., to repair to Leicester, to perambulate the town, and to call to their aid skilful men, with a view to ascertain the state of her majesty's tenements there, which had belonged to the various dissolved colleges, hospitals, guilds, and chantries—to inquire what quantity of timber would be required to restore the tenements in question; what the timber would cost exclusive of carriage; whether the queen was bound by any covenant to do the repairs; what yearly charges they would involve;

and whether the persons who had taken the property to farm might not conveniently find the timber, as well as do other reparations, at the same rents as they had paid hitherto. The commissioners were called on to make their report at the Michaelmas following the date of the precept.

The result of these inquiries is instructive to the reader of local history. It was recorded by the commissioners that there were 235 of her majesty's tenements in Leicester, which had belonged to the recently dissolved colleges, hospitals, guilds, and charities, and that they were in great decay; that there were 406 bays of houses in a state of ruin, their timber, plaster, and slates, having been wholly "wasted and carried away;" and that the houses belonging to the queen situate in the principal streets were in a dilapidated condition, giving to the place a forlorn aspect, and being a great "defacing" of the town. They estimated the cost of repairs in slates, plaster, and timber, for the 406 bays, to be £2,436; the amount of timber per bay required being eight tons, which at 10s. per ton (exclusive of carriage) would cost £1,624 for the entire number. They calculated that the timber needed to repair the 235 tenements would cost £465. As timber could not be procured from any place nearer to Leicester than the queen's woods at Hinckley, they stated that the carriage of it from the latter place would cost £598. The total amount of the outlay required to repair and rebuild the tenements in question would be therefore £5,123. The commissioners could not ascertain clearly what repairs the tenements were charged with, but they found that the yearly cost of repairing such of the buildings as were in good condition would be £390; that the collectors, bailiffs, and farmers of the various buildings were justly chargeable with various repairs, many of them being dead, and the remainder not to be found; and that some of the tenants were too poor to be able to defray the cost of repairing their buildings.

It is not very difficult to perceive that the queen's commissioners went back to court with a very discouraging representation of the state of affairs in Leicester, and it is still less difficult to perceive that as they were in the main dependent for their information on townspeople who had an interest in making such a representation, they could not expect to make a very favourable report. But the sequel shows how the movement operated.

Immediately on the completion of the inquiry, the Corporation made an application to the queen for a grant of the buildings, and the reversion of the whole of the Newarke Grange in fee-farm. In support of their petition they made use of every argument which they thought would promote its success; not always mindful of the



exact truth of their statements, and very adroitly basing their appeals on the report of the commissioners, which they themselves had in reality suggested, and of which they had furnished the principal materials. They drew a gloomy picture of the state of the borough: It was a "piteous thing" they said, "to behold the great gaps and ruins—yea, even in the principal streets of the town—certified by the said commissioners; thirty parishes were come to six, and four-and-twenty wards to ten." But in these statements the inhabitants departed from the truth; for there never were thirty parishes, nor four-and-twenty wards, in the town. They also underrated the value of the houses they asked the queen to give to the borough—they were now, the petitioners said, only yielding a candle rent, and two hundred of them were so much decayed that £5,000 would not be sufficient to put them in a tenantable condition. Her majesty had no timber near these parts to repair the houses, and the tenants were too poor to repair them; so that in the end they would all fall into ruin, and the rents be irrecoverable. This was the dark side of the question to present to Elizabeth: the bright side showed the advantages to the queen of granting the tenements in fee-farm to the Corporation. They would pay so much annually, and would give her majesty a fine every twenty-one years in addition. At the same time, the yearly charge to the Crown of £13 18s. 7d., occurring in collector's fees and in reparations, would be in future saved. Then the Corporation touched upon the public good they would be enabled to effect were the grant made as desired. They would, they continued, be enabled to support a public school (meaning thereby the Free Grammar School) and a preacher; to maintain the manufacture of cloth and caps, and thus profitably employ the poor; to pave the streets and to repair the bridges; and, indeed, to effect other public improvements. And, in conclusion, they hinted that the Crown had done an injustice to the townspeople, which it was under obligation to repair—not many years before, they urged, the town had pasturage for cows and horses (at a penny a week for a cow, and at twopence for a horse) at Beaumont Leys, which Henry VIII. by a demise of the land on lease to one Richard Humfrey, and her majesty by a more recent grant to Mr. H. Skipwith, had deprived them of, to the great loss of the inhabitants generally; and in consequence the Corporation had been forced to buy a lease of the Grange Farm for thirty-seven years, in order to provide the necessary pasturage for the townspeople.

Up to this period the borough, although it had been governed from the Norman Conquest by a Mayor and Council, or by a Mayor, Aldermen, and Councillors, to whom the administration of local

affairs had been intrusted, had never, in the strict legal sense of the term, been incorporated—had never been endowed with power to buy and sell lands, and to use a common seal, in its corporate capacity. It had held property by special licenses from the Crown, granted at successive periods; but when, through masses of church property falling into the hands of the government, it found itself unable to manage them, and made grants to this and other Corporations of the houses and lands, at certain rents called fee-farm rents, which were not much more than nominal; and the municipalities everywhere virtually succeeded to a large share of the possessions of the monasteries and guilds; they then required to be erected into what are legally considered Corporations, and to be thus invested with ample authority to dispose of their property, to inherit it, to sue and to be sued, and to exist as perpetual individualities.

When, therefore, the application of the inhabitants above explained was successful (as it proved to be) the INCORPORATION OF THE BOROUGH was necessarily effected. By the powerful influence of the Earl of Huntingdon, and by the active exertions of Mr. Parkins (the Recorder) and of Richard Archer (the Town Bailiff and Rent Collector), a Charter of Incorporation was procured from Queen Elizabeth, dated in the thirtieth year of her reign [1587-1588], which, while it confirmed all existing rights and privileges, conferred upon the borough all the powers already described as needful to the Corporation, under the new circumstances arising out of its acquisition of ecclesiastical property. The Charter also conveyed in fee-farm to the Mayor, the Burgesses, and their successors, the week-day shambles, the lands formerly belonging to the four colleges or guilds in Leicester, and the lease in reversion of the whole of the Newarke Grange. The yearly rent payable in return by the Corporation was £137 13s. 7d.—an amount much below what its equivalent would be in the present day.

Under an irresponsible system of local government, abuses are certain to develop themselves earlier or later. In this respect time makes no difference among mankind: for whether in the reign of Elizabeth or of Victoria, false principles will bear evil fruit. The charter of incorporation, and the great addition to the town property, had scarcely been obtained two years, before symptoms of mismanagement and speculation began to manifest themselves in the Corporation affairs. On the 21st of January, 1590, the Common Hall desired of the Mayor (Mr. John Hind) that all the lands and tenements given by her majesty's letters patent might remain to the use of the Mayor and Burgesses, according to the Queen's grant; that the town might be put in possession of them all; and that none might be sold but by the permission of a Common Hall. They added, that they were

grieved that Mr. Noryce, "the late Mayor," had set the town seal to sales *without consent of a Hall*; and that the Commissioners had bought and sold parcel of the said lands and tenements *among themselves*, without consent of the body. In November 1591 a kind of committee was appointed to examine the accounts of the Commissioners, and take a survey of the lands granted in fee-farm; and on July 28, 1592, it was agreed that Mr. Archer, who had been so useful in obtaining the grant of fee-farm, should have a lease of certain of the lands and tenements for twenty-one years on advantageous terms. Shortly afterwards, a bitter feud appears to have arisen among the aldermen, respecting the sales of the town estates and the dealings with Archer; for on the 18th of August Mr. William Norton stated, in presence of several of the Twenty-four, that Mr. Stanford had said to him, when they were coming from Hathern together a few days previous, that Mr. Mayor and the rest of them had so dealt with Archer that it should not stand. Mr. Mayor was not a fit man for his place, he said, and the recorder, "like a lame knave as he was," had behaved like a knave, and had no doubt "had a finger in the pie" about Archer. He (Mr. Stanford) added, he would have some of them by the heels. Meanwhile, two townsmen named Tusser and Layton, on behalf of the commonalty, forwarded a complaint to the queen that her majesty's grant of fee-farm had been so perverted that—owing to the corporation selling the lands and disposing the money to their own benefit—not five poor people were any the better for the grant, nor was the town improved; but the poor were more hardly used than ever, and were more racked for the tenements they held than ever they had been. They therefore prayed her majesty would allow her honourable council to examine into the affair. The Mayor, the Recorder, Mr. Heyrick, Mr. Clarke, and a few others declared that the allegation of the petition was most untrue; and at a meeting it was stated that one of the petitioners (Tusser) told a Mr. Rowes, who was an alderman, that one of his brethren had offered him (Tusser) 40s. if he would make a supplication to the queen against the commissioners and would also obtain five hundred signatures to the document. In the month of March following, a communication was received from the Privy Council (signed Jo. Cant, Jo. Pickering, W. Burleigh, Essex, Howard, Buckhurst, and Cecyll), directed to Mr. Justice Beaumont, to the Mayor of Leicester, and to the Recorder, stating that the Council had heard that some evil-disposed persons, having been put in trust for the management of her majesty's lands, then held by the town in fee-farm, had employed the greater part thereof to their own private uses. The parties to whom the communication was addressed were ordered to call before them all such

persons as were supposed to have been guilty of the offence mentioned in the letter; to examine them as to what estates they had made away, to whom, and for what consideration; and to deal with the parties so that they might be compelled to release the estates they had become unjustly possessed of, and make full restitution for the same, so that her majesty's gracious intentions might not be frustrated. An examination was made accordingly into the complaint; but *no record remains of the results of the commission of enquiry.* That the corporation had not been proceeding very honestly may be inferred from the fact that the Common Hall enacted, in the month following the date of the letter, that no man should disclose any of the secrets of the Hall, under payment of a penalty of £5; and several of them admitted, during the enquiry, that they had made use of "private seals." It is probable the misdeeds of the Corporation were hushed-up and some compromise thus effected.

A considerable increase was made to the rental of the Corporation in the years 1605 and 1606, occasioned by the falling-in of leases which had been granted by the Crown to various persons; of which the reversion fell to the municipal body on the expiration of the leases. The property in most cases was that which had formerly belonged to the religious houses and fraternities in Leicester, but which in the first instance, after their suppression, had been granted to private individuals, with a view to becoming ultimately the town possessions. From an ancient document, the following is shown to have been the various rents and lands and tenements in this way transferred to the borough:—

	£	s.	d.
Lands and tenements, held in fee farm, formerly part of the possessions of the hospitals of St. John and St. Leonard, afterwards pertaining to the college in the Newarke - - -	49	12	8
Chief rents belonging to the said late hospitals of St. John and St. Leonard - - - - -	0	18	4
Other lands and tenements, formerly demised to Hawkes and Bate, by indenture expiring about this date - - -	20	18	4
Other rents demised to Shingleton, granted to the mayor and burgesses - - - - -	3	0	1
Other rents, parcel of the possessions of Corpus Christi guild -	15	16	6
Chief rents belonging to the same guild - - -	6	15	1
Other rents, parcel of the possessions of St. Margaret's guild and town obit lands - - - - -	21	6	2
Chief rents formerly belonging to St. Margaret's guild - -	55	6	0
Rents received from the land of the college of St. Mary of the Castle - - - - -	12	16	6
More of the same rents - - - - -	7	12	6
Other rents, belonging to the collegiate church of the Newarke	0	16	8

While thus acquiring a larger rent-roll, the Corporation was not wholly free from the troublesome incidents to which the possession of property sometimes subjects mankind. There was at this time in progress an action brought against the Corporation by John Okes and John Lister, who claimed by royal letters-patent to be entitled to collect tolls and stallages in the markets. The details of this action are still extant; but they would not interest the modern reader. The Corporation resisted Okes's and Lister's claim, denying the legality of their pretensions, and adducing in support of their claim ancient charters granted by the Dukes of Lancaster to the borough. From these, it appeared that a bargain had been formerly made between the Dukes and the townspeople; according to which the latter were entitled to take the tolls, on condition of conveying to the former the manor of Wrangle in Lincolnshire.<sup>o</sup> This case was some time in litigation in the Court of the Duchy of Lancaster; but finally it was decided that Okes and Lister were entitled to collect the tolls and stallages. It was argued, curiously enough, on behalf of the plaintiffs, that "Leicester was sometyme a Cittie, consisting of 32 parishes, begonne by King Leir (long before Christ), from whom the name is derived—as truly pronounced, Leircestr, or Leir's Cittie. It is to be inferred that this Cittie had a markett appendaunt to it. It was twice rased, last in king Hen. 2, at what tyme it lost the name Cittie. About 30 or 40 yeares after k. John made it a Towne Corporate by the name of Maior and Comonality. Since that tyme they were incorporated by the name of Maior and Burgesses; and, since that,

<sup>o</sup> The origin of the connection of the Manor of Wrangle with the Town of Leicester, above-mentioned, is thus stated in an old manuscript:—

"Thomas (the sonne of the aforementioned Edmond Croochback, the sonne of King Hen. 3) married Alice, the sole daughter and heir of Henry Lacy, Earl of Lincoln, by which marriage the mannor of Wrangle (being part) came with the whole Earldom of Lincolne to the howse of Lancaster, and so descended to Henry Duke of Lancaster fitz Henry frere Thomas.

"It appeareth by an ancient Record that the said Henry Duke of Lancaster enfeofed the Maior and Comonality of Leicester of the said Mannor.

"That the said Duke's will was that neither he nor his heirs or any other by him should become enfeofed of the same if not by the said Maior and Comonality upon certaine condicons comprised in Indentures between the said Duke and the said Maior and Comonality.

"That those covenants were not performed in the life of the said Duke.

"By which Record it appears that the said Mannor of Wrangle continuwed in the possession of the Towne, at the Duke's death, and albeit it was the Duke's will that the same should have been so condicionally reconveyed to him, yet the Record shewed that it was not done in the Duke's life-tyme.

"And more strongly to confirme this:—Where the Towne plead that by virtue of their guifte the said Duke entred and thereof died seized, there is a Record that shewes that the Duke did not die seized of that Mannor: this hath been pleaded by the Towne, but never by any Evidence shewed to approve the same."

altered, consisting now of the Maior, Bailiffs, and Burgesses. Hereby it is conceived that the Markett is appended to the Towne by prescription."

In August 1614 King James paid the town a second visit; but the year was more memorable to the inhabitants as that in which the authorities purchased the Newarke Grange with all lands and tenements, mills and meadows, thereto belonging. The vendor was Sir William Smith, knight, and the purchase money £1,000.

In the reign of William and Mary, the property of the town was very extensive. The Chamberlains' Accounts for the year 1699-1700 show the particulars relative to its extent, position, and annual value. The insertion of the rent-roll at full length would occupy too many of these pages to justify its appearance. It contains the items of sums received yearly from portions of the "Grange Estate," comprising those which here follow:—

*Rents of the whole Granges, with the Appurtenances and the Four Yard and Two Yard Land thereof, known by the name of Weightman's Land, called Archer's Land, and a half Yard Land the Town purchased of the Lord Spencer in fee simple, as followeth:—*

	£.	s.	d.
Item. Of Mr. William Southwell, for part of the Newark Grange and four Yard Land in the Southfields of Leicester, and the Grange Barn, and part of the yard by lease, per annum	- 28	0	0
Item. Of Henry Colson for three Yard Land there per lease, per annum	- - - - -	19	14 0
Item. Of Mr. More for the Grange yard and barn, per annum	- 3	0	0
Item. Of Mr. John Abney for four Yard Land there and part of the Grange yard, per lease per annum	- - - - -	25	16 9½
Item. Of Mr. John Pratt for three Yard Land, per lease per annum	- - - - -	19	7 5½
Item. Of Mr. John Wilkins for three Yard Land and a half there, per lease per annum	- - - - -	23	0 0
Item. Of Thomas Ward for three Yard Land there, per lease per annum	- - - - -	20	0 0
Item. Of Edward Broughton for four acres of land out of their several farms to dig clay to make bricks, per lease per annum	5	0	0
Item. Of Mr. Joseph Cradock for the Newark Mills and Windmill thereto belonging, per lease per annum	- - -	15	0 0
Item. Of Mr. Richard Townsend for Gosling Close, per lease per annum	- - - - -	16	0 0
Item. Of Mr. Thomas Hartshorne for the three acres of land lying and being in the South Fields of the said borough, lately purchased of Simon Barwell, gent., and late Mr. Cotton's land, and now in the occupation of the said Mr. Richard Townsend, per annum	- - - - -	2	0 0

Then occur the rents derived from the Bead House Meadows ; from property in the North Gate, Sanvy Gate, Soar Lane (anciently called Walker Lane), within the North Gates, in the South Gates, in Burges' Meadow in Swine's Market (now called High Street), in the Saturday Market, in Loseby Lane, in Gallowtree Gate on the west side, in Belgrave Gate, and in the country ; and from property in the South Gate, in the Swine's Market, in or near Belgrave Gate, in Sanvy Gate, in Cank Street, and in St. Nicholas' and St. Mary's parishes, "parcel of the Town Obit Lands of St. Margaret's Guild, and parcel of the Fee Farm Rents heretofore demised by Queen Elizabeth to Mr. Hawks and Bates by indenture expressed."

In addition to the rents already detailed, a large number of others, placed under general heads, are enumerated in the account. The heads are as follow : "Other Rents of Land and Tenements, parcel of the town and manor of Leicester, heretofore amongst other things given and granted to the Mayor, Bailiffs, and Burgesses and their successors, in fee farm, for ever ;" "Other Rents of Corpus Christi Guild in Leicester, heretofore in Mr. Archer's collection, and now parcel of the Lands and Tenements which the Mayor, Bailiffs, and Burgesses purchased of queen Elizabeth, to them and their successors for ever ;" "Other Rents, part of the Possession of the late Guild in Leicester, parcel of the Town Obit Land, heretofore collected by Mr. Arthur Tatam ;" "Other Rents, part of Mr. Wild's Rents ;" "Other Rents, part of Mr. Wild's Second Lease ;" "A Rental of the Lands and Possessions belonging to the late College of the Blessed Virgin Mary, over-against the Castle of Leicester, heretofore demised by Queen Elizabeth to Edward Holt, Esq., and by her Majesty granted to the Mayor, Bailiffs, and Burgesses, and their successors, amongst other things, in fee farm ;" "Rents payable at the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary belonging to the Newark of Leicester ;" "Other Rents of the Town and Manor of Leicester, and Parcel of the Lands and Possession of the Duchy of Lancaster, part thereof lying and being in the County of Leicester" (including £15 received of Mr. Wm. Southwell and Mr. Wm. Deane for the Shambles and Drapery) ; "Other Rents received of new ;" "Other Rents for Certain Lands purchased by the Corporation and other new Rents ; and, finally, "Rents given to the School and other charitable uses."

At this date, there were shops and stalls in the Saturday Market, let to the shoemakers, the mercers, the chandlers, and the glovers, also paying yearly rents to the Corporation. The names of the various tradesmen thus accommodated are recorded. From the lists these are copied as the principal shoemakers : Thomas Miles, John Rayner, Richard Foxton, George Hartshorne, John Berridge, John Stretton,

John Weston, Thomas Huffin, William Burstall, Ralph Ward, Robert Warburton, and Isaac Harris. The mercers were—Mr. Thomas Ludlam, Mr. Simon Thorp, Mr. Thomas Laurence (Silver Street), Jonas Davis, and Mr. John Scampton. The chandlers and others were—Mr. William Harris, Jane Biggs, widow, John Worthington, John Newton, Gilbert Fawsitt, Jonas Dentshire, Elias Hartell, John Adcock, John Mitchell, John Townsend (for his mill-shop), Widow Coker (for her kitchen), Thomas Webster, Executors of Geo. Steeres, Executors of John Dan, Thomas Beaumont, Arthur Noon (baker), and Executors of Geo. Beckett. The glovers were—John Browne, Samuel Holden, Thomas Blower, George Holden, John Bennett, Isaac Burridge, Edward Raphin, Samuel Sheffield, and Richard Kirke.

Besides the Fee Farm Rents already mentioned, there were Chief Rents belonging to the hospital of St. John and St. Leonard payable to the Corporation at Michaelmas, others belonging to Corpus Christi Guild payable at Christmas, and others belonging to St. Margaret's Guild; Lammas Tithes and Herbage due yearly to the Mayor and Burgesses; and Fines and accidental Receipts.

At the commencement of the eighteenth century (1701), the receipts from the town property were £1078; the expenditure £1249.

Towards the middle of the century, these amounts had respectively increased, being as follows:—

				RECEIPTS.		EXPENDITURE.
				£		£
1743 to 1744	-	-	-	1739	..	1150
1744 to 1745	-	-	-	1708	..	1035
1745 to 1746	-	-	-	1726	..	1069
1746 to 1747	-	-	-	1705	..	1106
1747 to 1748	-	-	-	1766	..	1695

The financial year ran from Michaelmas to Michaelmas.

It does not appear that in the closing years of the century the figures underwent any great alteration; nor is it evident that any gross mismanagement occurred before the year 1800. Subsequently, it would seem, numerous malversations occurred; but the description of them does not fall within the purpose of this volume.



## CHAPTER XXI.

## THE PARLIAMENTARY HISTORY OF LEICESTER IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.

IN the thirteenth chapter of the "History of Leicester" (1849), I have noticed the commencement of the representative system in connection with the borough; mentioning the fact that in the year 1295 Ralph Norman and Robert of Scharnford were elected to serve the burgesses in Parliament, and stating that they and their immediate successors were all townsmen (usually tradesmen and sometimes tavern-keepers), members of the Guild Merchant, who were paid 2s. per day for the whole time they were absent from their homes and occupations while engaged in parliamentary business. The gradual growth of the authority of the House of Commons is also traced in the twenty-sixth chapter of the same History; where it is shown that during the reigns of the Lancastrian monarchs the popular power in the Lower House became greatly extended. The mode of elections in Leicester, previously democratic, became modified in Edward the Fourth's reign, and the reactionary tendency under the Tudor dynasty is minutely but impressively demonstrated in the civic struggles of the latter part of the fifteenth and the sixteenth centuries; the direct interference and dictation of the Crown in the reigns of Henry the Seventh, Henry the Eighth, Mary, and Elizabeth, being openly manifested in the borough elections. In 1593 the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster distinctly told the mayor *he* alone should make choice of the two members; but the inhabitants resented the attempt at dictation, and met at a Common Hall and elected the mayor himself (Mr. Stanford), with Mr. James Clarke, an innkeeper (landlord of the Blue Boar), in opposition to the nominees of the Chancellor, Mr. Tamworth and Mr. Brockas. During the Commonwealth, on the dissolution of the Long Parliament, the Puritan corporation chose the representatives of the borough. On the Restoration, all "the freemen and commons" claimed a right to vote in the election, and returned Sir John Prettyman and Sir William Hartopp, knights. A double return having been made, the House of Commons decided that Prettyman and Hartopp

were elected, chiefly through the exertions of the former. In the closing years of Charles the Second's reign, the attempt was made to substitute a Town Council chosen by the Crown for that then in existence in Leicester, and to vest in it the choice of the borough representatives. James the Second persisted in the same infatuated policy, which, however, was abandoned on the accession of William the Third and Queen Mary.

After the deposition of the Stuarts, the inhabitants were left more freely to exercise their choice; and at the commencement of the eighteenth century the local representatives of the two great parties in the State appear to have agreed upon a compromise. In 1701, Laurence Carter, jun., Esq., recorder, a friend of high "Church and King" principles (who had previously been elected), was chosen to serve the town in Parliament with James Winstanley, Esq., of Braunston (a whig). In 1702, Sir George Beaumont, of Coleorton, was substituted for Mr. Carter; and the baronet and Mr. Winstanley sat together in the six parliaments of Queen Anne's reign and the first of George the First's in 1714. Mr. Winstanley dying in 1719, George Noble, Esq., was elected in his place. In 1722, Sir George Beaumont was chosen with Sir Laurence Carter; and on the latter being made a baron of the Exchequer in 1726, Thomas Boothby Skrymsher, Esq., was put in the vacant seat.

The great question dividing politicians at that time, and underlying all others, was that relating to the succession. A large party in the country thought the Stuarts had been unfairly deprived of their legitimate right to rule these realms, and among them were ranged many persons of aristocratic feeling and zealous temperament—the political descendants of the loyal cavaliers of the previous century. Their opponents were the supporters of the reigning family of the Guelphs of Hanover; and this party steadily maintained their allegiance to the Georges; for they considered the Stuarts had entirely and deservedly forfeited the confidence of the nation, by tampering with its Protestant liberties and with its parliamentary and municipal franchises. The friends of the Stuarts, known as "Jacobites," were found in the two opposite orders of society—the higher and the lower. The old aristocracy and gentry were mainly to be found, either openly or secretly, ranged on the side of the two Pretenders; and the populace in the towns shared largely in their sympathies. The middle classes—the substantial yeomen in the agricultural districts and the tradesmen in the boroughs—were attached to the reigning family, whose rule they considered to be identified with the extension of civil and religious liberty. They were therefore Reformers, and were known as "Whigs." With the

aristocracy and populace adverse to them, they strenuously held to their principles in times of extreme difficulty.

In Leicester, the Corporation was thoroughly and notoriously Jacobite. It appears probable that this attachment to the Stuarts, begun at the Restoration, when the reaction from a previous parliamentary bias had taken place, had been continued uninterruptedly to the reign of George II. To such an extent was this feeling carried, that the Corporation was charged with strong disaffection to the reigning family, and with choosing as its members men of mean character and ability, overlooking persons possessing fortune and reputation who were loyal to the Sovereign.

Disastrous, however, as the campaign of 1745 proved to the Pretender's friends, they did not desert his cause; for the Corporation persisted in returning members favourable to his interest. One of these about to be named was the son of Sir Nathan Wright, the Recorder of Leicester in the reign of Charles II., afterwards Lord Keeper. This was George Wright, Esq., a Tory and Jacobite. With him was united James Wigley, Esq., of Scraptoft, a gentleman of humane, amiable, and benevolent disposition, but also a Jacobite. These were the members for Leicester from the year 1737 to 1765; in 1738 they were unsuccessfully opposed by Mr. Ruding, a resident Whig. It appears to have been the policy of the whig party to propose one candidate only at the contests in 1737 and in 1754. In the latter instance, Robert Mitford, Esq., better known as "Major" Mitford, was the whig candidate. He was opposed with all the interest of the Corporation. The polling took place on Friday, Saturday, Monday, and Tuesday, the 19th, 20th, 22nd, and 23rd of April, 1754. In the course of the contest the well-remembered lines were sung in the streets:—

"As I was going to the Blue Bell,  
I met Major Mitford going to hell;  
I gave him a kick and bade him get in,  
To make room for his d— Hanoverian king."

The streets also resounded with cries of "D— King George!" "No Hanoverian king!" "Prince Charles for ever!" "Wright and Wigley for ever!" To show their contempt for the king and the royal family, the mob, in allusion to his farmer-like character and that of his relatives, would also hum, as they walked along the streets, the following snatch:—

"We'll give them hoe and spittle,  
And send them big and little,  
To hoe their turnip lands again."

The election terminated in the triumph of the Corporation and of Jacobitism. The numbers were—Wright, 1,238; Wigley, 1,295;

Mitford, 1786. The entire number of electors appears to have been nearly 2,300, the population being at this date about 10,000. There were, however, many non-resident electors, and the poll-book shows many names twice over. The fury of partisan zeal following this contest did not cease for months afterwards, as in December of the same year the verse about Major Mitford was sung in the Market Place and the Higheross Street by various persons; and at the Horse and Trumpet inn it was not uncommon for people to drink "D——n to King George and Mitford."

The poll-book of this election (printed by John Gregory) is extant; and it is remarkable to find on enquiry many of the same names then ranged on the sides of Toryism and Whigism as in our own day. A few examples will show the reader the truth of this observation:—

Joseph Cradock, gent.	-	-	-	Wright & Wigley.
John Wood	-	-	-	W. W.
John Burgess	-	-	-	Mitford.
Joseph Whetstone	-	-	-	Mitford.
John Parsons	-	-	-	W. W.
Nicholas Higginson	-	-	-	W. W.
Mark Graham	-	-	-	W. W.
Joseph Johnson	-	-	-	Mitford.
Edward Loseby	-	-	-	Mitford.
Andrew Burnaby, clerk	-	-	-	W. W.
Samuel Miles	-	-	-	W. W.
Thomas Martin, Ansty	-	-	-	W. W.
Thomas Johnson, do.	-	-	-	W. W.
Simeon Iliff	-	-	-	Mitford.
Edward Simpkin, Oadby	-	-	-	W. W.
John Paget, Leicester	-	-	-	Mitford.
Wm. Herrick, do.	-	-	-	Wigley & Mitford.
Clement Stretton	-	-	-	W. W.
Robert Flower	-	-	-	Mitford.
John Flower	-	-	-	Mitford.
John Burley, New Parks	-	-	-	W. W.
John Harrison, Stocking Wood	-	-	-	Mitford.
Hugh Worthington	-	-	-	Mitford.
Joseph Gregory	-	-	-	W. W.
Simeon Brewin	-	-	-	Mitford.
Arthur Hesilrige, gent.	-	-	-	Mitford.
John Miles, gent.	-	-	-	W. W.
Thomas Jee, gent.	-	-	-	Mitford.
Jonathan Brookhouse	-	-	-	Mitford.
Thomas Pares, jun., gent.	-	-	-	Wright & Mitford.
James Winstanley, Esq., of Braunstone	-	-	-	W. W.
Samuel Bankart	-	-	-	Mitford.
Abraham Bankart	-	-	-	Mitford.

Thus, one hundred and seventeen years ago, was the community divided into parties, members of which polled as their descendants would now probably poll, with some few exceptions.

Messrs. Wright and Wigley were again returned in the year 1761, unopposed; but on the death of Mr. Wigley, five years afterwards, Anthony James Keck, Esq., of Stoughton, formerly of Twickenham, was elected in his place. Mr. Keck became possessed of that lordship through his marriage with the niece of Mrs. Arabella Beaumont, the last member of that family settled at Stoughton, who died a few years previous; and in consequence of this alliance he acquired considerable local influence. In the year 1766, Mr. Wright dying, his successor was John Darker, Esq., a London merchant of large fortune, whose ancestors were residents of Stoughton. He was a Tory; but he had the reputation of being independent in spirit and honest in principle. The Whig party being still unrepresented, though composed of an influential and respectable class of townsmen, being allied with some noblemen and gentlemen in the county, made preparations for a contest in the year 1768, and resolved to nominate two candidates professing their political sentiments. These were the Hon. Booth Grey, second son to the Earl of Stamford, and Colonel Eyre Coote, of West Park, Southampton. The Tories brought forward Mr. Darker again; with Edward Palmer, Esq., of Withcote. The polling began on the 22nd of March, continuing until the 6th of April. In this contest the Duke of Rutland and the Earl of Stamford, on the Liberal side, employed their influence to counteract that of the Corporation. Mr. Grey's manners, associated with an affable and generous behaviour, are said to have rendered him eminently and universally popular. In consequence of this, and the course pursued by the magistracy, no riot or disturbance occurred during the protracted period over which the polling extended. It terminated in the following result:—

Grey	-	-	-	-	1,366
Coote	-	-	-	-	1,334
Darker	-	-	-	-	1,284
Palmer	-	-	-	-	1,260

Adding together the two highest numbers, it seems the total of electors was 2,650. The triumph obtained by the Whigs was considered to be great; and at the chairing a larger assemblage was seen in the town than ever before noticed in the memory of the oldest man living. During the remainder of the week the public-houses were kept open for the friends of the members, and the festivities were general. In the poll-book the same names are found ranged on the same sides as at the election in 1754.

At the next election, Mr. Grey was returned with Mr. Darker—probably by way of compromise, to avoid a contest. After this date the old party-cries of “No Hanoverian King,” “D— King George,” and others, entirely ceased.

At another succeeding election, in 1780, the Hon. Booth Grey and Mr. Darker were again returned. Four years subsequently, on the death of the latter, Shuckburgh Ashby, Esq., was chosen to fill up the void. In the same year (1784), both seats became vacant; John Macnamara, Esq. (a Liberal), and Charles Loraine Smith, Esq. (a Tory), being elected without a contest.

The system of compromise was once more interrupted in the year 1790, when all the embers of party strife were lighted up into a flame by an opposition between Parkyns and Montolieu, Smith and Hallad. On this occasion, an unusually severe struggle took place. “The fury of the electioneering spirit was then at its height. Bribery and corruption, drunkenness and disorder (says the late Mr. W. Gardiner) continued for nearly three weeks.”

Thomas Boothby Parkyns, Esq., was the eldest son of Sir Thomas Parkyns, Bart., and a descendant of Mr. Parkyns, Recorder of this borough in the reign of Elizabeth. Of Mr. Montolieu little appears to be known, except that he was a Whig, and the colleague of Mr. Parkyns. Samuel Smith, Esq., resided at Wilford—being, we believe, a banker at Nottingham. Mr. Hallad was a man of large fortune, acquired in the East Indies: he was what is sometimes called a “Nabob;” and it is related he brought bags of guineas with him to Leicester, with a view of corrupting the electors. After blood had been spilt and many thousands of money spent, it was agreed that each party to prevent further mischief should withdraw a candidate. A compromise, therefore, took place, in favour of Parkyns and Smith. This proceeding greatly excited the popular party; and Rozzell, their mouthpiece, wrote an indignant poem in its condemnation. Their rage knew no limits. “They broke into the Exchange, and threw the books and corporate papers out of the windows; another party attacked the Assembly Room, where the committee escaped by concealing themselves in the roof of the building. The concert library of music books and instruments were thrown out of the windows, and torn into pieces. I (says the late Mr. Gardiner) was near the place at the time, and saw the kettle drums roll out of the cases when they fell to the ground. For a time they played upon them, till a fellow cut one of them in two, when they were presently beat to a mummy. The whole of the Market Place and all the way to Coal Hill appeared as if the ground had been covered with snow; for the Corporation papers thrown out of the Exchange, and the music books from the Assembly

Rooms on the Coal Hill, torn into small pieces, met at the East Gates, and in some places were ankle deep."

It was impossible to allay the spirit of vehement partisanship now evoked; and, besides, as the French Revolution was in progress, the effect of the horrible scenes enacted by the followers of Robespierre, united with the disgust created among sober and temperate Reformers, on witnessing the burlesques performed in the name of Liberty, produced a reaction in favour of the Tory party which for the time was irresistible. Hence, when the next election occurred in 1796, it took place under peculiar and unforeseen circumstances. Mr. Parkyns (created Lord Raneliffe in the year preceding) had now become a supporter of Pitt's administration. Mr. Smith was already predisposed in that direction. These two gentlemen therefore offered themselves as candidates in alliance with each other in the year under notice. To them were opposed Walter Ruding, Esq., of West Cotes, near Leicester, and Bertie Greatheed, Esq., of Guy's Cliffe, near Warwick, who as frankly and zealously opposed the Government as the rival candidates avowed themselves in its favour. In this trial of public feeling, the old distinctions of Whig and Tory were less regarded than the question whether the existing administration should be supported or opposed. By a large majority the constituency decided on the election of Lord Raneliffe and Mr. Smith, who polled respectively—Smith 1,029, Raneliffe 993; against 556 for Greatheed, and 537 for Ruding; though the two latter gentlemen held highly respectable social positions, and were in every respect unexceptionable.

This concludes the electoral history of Leicester during the eighteenth century. One feature must have arrested the notice of every reader: we allude to the fact that the principle of compromise, either constrained or voluntary, principally prevailed through the era over which this narrative extends. From the reign of Charles II. to that of George II., Tory influences, whether reflected in adherence to the slavish maxims fostered by the high prerogative party of the Court, or in a blind attachment to a dynasty which had perished through its own folly and imbecility, predominated in this borough; the only exception to be taken to this remark being warranted by the election of Mr. James Winstanley in 1701, and his continuance in the representation for fourteen years. But after Major Mitford's opposition, the Jacobite influence received a blow from which it never entirely recovered; for the victory gained by Grey and Coote was followed by the agreement to take "one and one," even down to the year 1826, when Mr. Pares (Whig) and Mr. Mansfield (Tory) jointly represented the borough. The election of 1795 does not disprove the

general statement ; for (as it is above remarked) it happened under unusual circumstances. So evenly balanced were the two great parties in Leicester in the eighteenth century.

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## CHAPTER XXII.

### THE HOSIERY MANUFACTURE IN LEICESTER.

THE district of which the town of Leicester is the centre has always been adapted to the feeding of sheep and cattle. Its meadows and fields have ever been productive of rich herbage, supplying flocks and herds with the nutriment fitted to sustain and fatten them. In the nature of things, therefore, this has been a wool-growing county ever since it has been the residence of a civilized and settled population. The townsmen, by collecting the wool from their neighbours in the villages, or inviting them to sell it in the town markets, have accumulated the raw material of manufactures, which they have worked up into fabrics of rude fashion and homely use, suited for clothing and covering the person. Early in the thirteenth century, in Leicester, the wool was spun in the household, and then taken to the weaver, in whose loom it was woven into blankets, or a coarse scarlet cloth, which were sold here and elsewhere, as at Stamford and Boston. Woolfells and wool were also carried there and sold to tradesmen coming from other parts of the country, on certain fixed days every year. The records of the ancient government of the town, called the Guild Merchant, abound in references to the usages of the weavers of blankets and scarlet cloth, and the dealers in woolfells and wool ; to their visits to Stamford and Boston ; and to their dealings with each other. It would also appear that in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries some among the townsmen acquired what would to them appear to be riches ; enabling them to purchase local privileges from the kings and earls of the period, and exemptions from servile and degrading obligations.

In the fifteenth century, the long continuance of civil war was attended with disastrous effects to the commerce and manufactures of



this and other populations. In consequence, the operations of industry were checked, the interchange of commodities was paralyzed, the security of person and of property was shaken, all orders of people became impoverished, and the buildings in the towns consequently fell into dilapidation and decay. Still, a trade in wool was carried on in Leicester in the century under notice, as several generations of the Wigston family, and other persons named Dalton, Newton, Lichfield, Feneys, and Wade, were members of the Staple of Calais resident in the town—there collecting the wool of the district, in order to transmit it in large quantities for sale at Calais; but we have no evidence that the raw material was then worked up on the spot by weavers. Various "Occupations" were established in Leicester in the fifteenth century; for example, that of the Tailors in 1450, and subsequently those of the Smiths, the Shoemakers, the Bakers, and the Butchers.

After the early date first alluded to, it is not, however, until the middle of the sixteenth century, that anything in the shape of manufactures is distinctly mentioned in local documents. It was in the reign of Edward the Sixth that, in order to find work for the unemployed, the members of the Corporation (spoken of as the Twenty Four and the Forty Eight) are said, in the old Common Hall Book, to have been individually called on yearly to require coarse woollen cloth, called "kersey,"<sup>p</sup> to be made in pieces, each kersey to be eighteen yards long, and to be taken to the Mayor's Hall to be sealed. This plan does not seem to have been very successful for any long period; as in 1574 an attempt was made to establish a cloth manufactory by the agency of Thomas Bradgate of Gloucester, to whom the Corporation lent 100 marks for seven years, by way of encouragement. This effort was carried on for thirteen or fourteen years without any very satisfactory result, and then continued by Henry Bradgate, the successor of Thomas. He was again subsidized in 1592 by the Corporation.

It was not until the close of the century that stockings were made in Leicester; the Corporation, in 1597, by the appointment of the Earl of Huntingdon, lending £10 to Thomas Moseley to set poor children to work in knitting "Jersey" stockings. It seems that these articles were made of the finest portion of the wool, separated from the rest by combing. But the stocking was probably not the same kind of thing as that known to us in modern days. "The stocking is not a garment of high antiquity," says Mr. John Gough Nichols, "either in name or substance. Our ancestors clothed their lower limbs with hose, of which the stock or stocking was a part only. At first the name was not stocking, but stock. The second syllable is a

<sup>p</sup> Kersey—"Coarse woollen cloth."—*Bailey's Dictionary*

corruption of the old plural *en* ; and the phrase—a pair of stocken—was gradually altered to a pair of stockings \* \* \* Hose were a combination of what we now term drawers and stockings, such as in more recent times have been named pantaloons. They covered all the lower part of the body as the doublet covered the upper part.

\* \* But these stocks, stockings, or hose, were all alike made of linen or woollen cloth, cut into shape and sewn together. \* \* Before the term stocking was finally adopted in its modern sense, the coverings of the leg were called *stocks of hose* or *nether stocks* ; whilst what we now call breeches were termed *upper stocks*.” When the great Earl of Leicester, as a knight of St. Michael of France, celebrated the feast of that order in the year 1571, at the town of Warwick, he appeared in “stocks of hose of knit silk” and in “upper stocks” of white velvet, slashed with cloth of silver. Knit stockings, particularly those of silk, were in high estimation in the reign of Elizabeth ; but they are believed to have been made with needles worked with the hand.<sup>a</sup>

It is universally admitted that William Lee invented the stocking-frame as early as 1589, at Woodborough or Calverton, in Nottinghamshire ; but the machine was not introduced into Leicester for many years afterwards—the hand-knit stockings being used and considered very valuable, as Mr. Nichols shows in the paper already referred to. There is, in fact, no definite evidence as to the date of the first weaving of stockings by machinery in Leicester. I have searched the ancient books of the Corporation for the purpose of ascertaining what testimony they furnish on this head, and present the result in the following pages. It may be premised, however, that a statement or tradition appeared in the *Leicester Journal*, some years ago, on the authority of the Rev. Mr. Ross, a resident clergyman, to the effect that a Nicholas Allsop brought a frame to Leicester and settled in the Northgate Street, about the year 1680, and that he found it necessary to work secretly in a cellar, and had some difficulty in vending the productions of his frame.<sup>b</sup> This story Mr. Gardiner repeats in the second volume of his *Music and Friends* (p. 811), altering the date to 1670, and adding that, as the opposition wore away, Allsop ventured to take James Parker, a native, as an apprentice.<sup>c</sup> Upon the death of Allsop, Parker took Samuel Wright, a quaker, in the same capacity ; these persons being the only weavers of hose in Leicester for many years afterwards.

Allsop is said to have come from Northamptonshire. Six years

<sup>a</sup> These and other statements will be found in a paper written by John Gough Nichols, Esq., entitled “Notes on Ancient Hosiery,” read at the Meeting of the Leicestershire Architectural and Archæological Society held at Hinckley, in July 1864.

before the date at which he is alleged to have introduced the frame into Leicester, a petition was presented from the woolcombers of the town to the Corporation, wherein it is represented that eight hundred tods of wool were yearly wrought up by them, in order that the same might be spun and knit up into stockings. It was further represented that the combers kept constantly at work about two thousand poor people, of various ages, of the town of Leicester and neighbouring villages. It is thus seen that the manufacture of stockings was very extensive in this town in the year 1674; but if Gardiner's statement be correct as to the number of workers of frames, they were made by hand, not by machinery; since the proprietors of two or three frames could not employ two thousand persons.

Various facts in relation to Allsop himself are directly contradictory to the tradition. It appears that, instead of being a stranger, he was originally an apprentice with Edward Noone, mercer, and that he was made free on the second of February, 1655, when he paid the usual entrance fee of ten shillings, and was duly sworn as a freeman.<sup>r</sup> He was therefore not brought up to the occupation of a framework-knitter; though, by a subsequent entry in the town books, it appears he had entered upon a new trade in the year 1680. The entry is as follows:—

Edward Allsop, eldest son of Nicholas Alsop, of the burrough of Leicester, silkweaver, made free the twenty-first day of February, 1680: his fine a pottle of wine.”

A few years subsequently his name is mentioned in another way in the following entry:—

“Joseph Parker, apprentice with Nicholas Alsop, of the burrough of Leicester, mercer, made free the eight and twentieth day of May, 1687, and paid for his fine - - - - - *xs. et jur.*”

Allsop, so far, appears to have been known as a silk-weaver and mercer. As we proceed in the enquiry we find he is differently designated. For example, in the following entry:—

“John Lewin, apprentice with Nicholas Alsop, hosier, made free June 10, 1693, and paid for his fine - - - - - *xs. et jur.*”

In the next entry occurs, for the first time in our local records, the mention of any person as a framework-knitter:—

“Samuel Alsop, second son of Nicholas Alsop, of the burrough of Leicester, *framework-knitter*, made free the 18th of July, 1698, and paid for his fine - - - - - *vs. et jur.*”

<sup>r</sup>1655 [old style]. “Nicholas Alsop, appntice with Edward Noone, Mercer, made free the second of February, 1655, his fyne - - - - - *xs. et jur.*”  
Town Book.

A similar entry in the same year may also be adduced :—

“ John Alsop, son of Francis Alsop, of Onelep, in the county of Leicester, yeoman, apprentice to Nicholas Alsop, of the burrough of Leicester, *framework-knitter*: made free the twentieth day of July, 1698, and paid for his fine - - - - - *xs. et jur.*”

One more entry, in illustration, will show that by this time Alsop had become settled in his trade of a framework-knitter :—<sup>a</sup>

“ Arthur Noone, eldest son of Arthur Noon, of the burrough of Leicester, baker, and apprenticed to Nicholas Alsop of the same burrough, framework-knitter, made free the 22nd day of June, 1700: his fine a pottle of wine.”

The first manufacturer of stockings had now, therefore, had five apprentices—his second son, another relative, and three others—who must have been with him during the active prosecution of his business; and this inference carries us back to the year 1690, when he was only known as a “hosier,” or simply a dealer in stockings; though there is every reason to believe he regularly manufactured stockings. The tradition informs us he was compelled to employ his apprentices secretly, owing to the popular hostility to the introduction of machinery, so that his being designated a “hosier” may have been intended to disguise his real occupation. His business appears to have proved profitable; sufficiently so to have entitled him to be made an alderman at the latter end of the year 1700. He did not, however, long continue in this office; as, in three years afterwards, in a record of the proceedings of the Corporation, we meet with this memorandum :—

“ Ordered at this meeting, that Mr. Nicholas Alsop be dismissed from serving in the company of the Twenty Four.”

Unfortunately little is known concerning this person, who, as the introducer of framework-knitting into Leicester, laid the foundation of a manufacture which has become so extensive and so important as that of hosiery.

All we can gather from the foregoing extracts is, that as he was made free in the year 1655, when he had completed the term of his

<sup>a</sup> Other entries in the Freemen's Apprentice Books belonging to the Corporation are as follow :—

1656.—“ Sampson Pougher, Jersey comer, made free by consent of a Comon Hall held the last day of October 1655: his fyne £3 6s., and sworn.”

1684.—“ Francis Arnold, apprentice to John Daire of the Borough of Leicester, hosier, made free and paid his fine - - - - - *xs. et jur.*”

“ John Hercourt, son of John Hercourt, of the said Borough, apprentice with Robert Worth of the said Borough, hosier, made free and paid for his fine *xs. et jur.*

“ July 7. Wm. Hawser apprentice to Richard Hill, hosier, made free.”

In 1695, Robert Worth, Hosier, was made free; and in 1697,—Topp, Hosier, was also enfranchised. Joseph Alsop, eldest son of Thomas Alsop, of the Borough of Leicester, Hosier, was made free in April 1698.

apprenticeship with Mr. Noone, the mercer, he must have been born about the year 1634; in which case he was far advanced in middle age when he began the framework-knitting. He lived to be an old man; as appears from his having been dismissed from the company of the Twenty Four when sixty-nine years of age. It is seen that he had sons and relatives engaged with him in the business, and that he acquired a considerable amount of property, and the tradition is he lived near the North Gate; but all beyond this—the history of his struggles and his difficulties, and even the date of his decease—is at present unknown. He left behind him, however, a number of successors, from whose hands the manufacture received an impulse which carried forward its development at the opening of the eighteenth century, and the names of Pougher, Parker, Noone, and Lewin, were among those most conspicuously identified at this date with the progress of framework-knitting. They are said to have been materially helped in their businesses by the capital of Mr. Watts of Danett's Hall, the builder of that once well-known mansion.

◊ In 1727 the borough of Leicester contained a larger number of framework-knitters than the town of Nottingham; it having been variously estimated at from five hundred to seven hundred; while at Nottingham not more than four hundred were engaged in the manufacture.<sup>3</sup> The total number of frames in the Midland Counties is said then to have been more than three thousand five hundred.<sup>4</sup> In a description of England published in 1769, the town of Leicester is stated to have returned annually to the Hosiery Manufacture as much as £60,000. In 1790 there were about three thousand frames employed in Leicester.

After the lapse of half a century, some of the names associated with Allsop's in the introduction of the stocking-frame into Leicester, were still retained in connection with the Hosiery Manufacture. Mr. Gardiner (*Music and Friends*) says that in the year 1750 the principal manufacturers were—

Mr. Lewin.

Barns, Chamberlain and Burgess.

Cradock and Bunney.

Thomas Pougher.

Richard Garle (with whom was  
Sir Arthur Hazlerig).

Joseph Cradock.

John Willows.

Mr. Miles.

As it is not the purpose of this chapter to follow up in detail the various inventions and improvements made in connection with the Stocking Frame, I do not enter upon those subjects; contenting myself merely with stating, that during the eighteenth century the plain frame was but little altered after its first construction, though

<sup>4</sup> Henson's *History of the Framework-Knitters*, 1831.

a great number of new effects were produced by means of a separate contrivance to act upon the looping-needles. Alterations were made in the frame in 1758 (by Mr. Jedediah Strutt of Derby), in 1761, in 1763 (by Mr. Morris), in 1774 (by Horton, Marsh, and Wright), in 1778 (by Mr. Hayne of Nottingham), in 1781 (by Mr. Dalby of Leicester), in 1782 (the Warp Frame), in 1786 (by Mr. Webbe of Birmingham), in 1790 (by Mr. Hague), and in 1791 (by William Dawson of Leicester). The invention of the last-named person was called the Dawson Wheel: it enabled the workmen to form any kind of figure or pattern upon the surface of the work.

Some among the manufacturers became opulent, and laid the foundations of fortunes for their families, which are still resident in the district. In some cases, the immediate descendants acquired considerable social position for a generation or two, and then disappeared below the surface of public observation. Of these John Lewin, probably one of the apprentices of Alsop mentioned on page 255, was the most conspicuous. He was distinguished by the courtesy-title "Esquire," and assumed armorial bearings; and on his decease in 1775 was buried in the graveyard of St. Mary's Church, under a costly monument, which still remains, though in a state of dilapidation. Abstinence Pougher, probably the son of Sampson Pougher, the Jersey comber, was another of the successful hosiers who rose above his fellows to a rank in the social scale similar to that of Mr. Lewin, and was honoured with a monument on his decease.

The extended History of the Hosiery Manufacture by Mr. W. Felkin of Nottingham comprises all that is known on the general subject up to the latest period; and to it the reader, who desires more minute and complete information, may be referred.

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## CHAPTER XXIII.

### THE RELIGIOUS DENOMINATIONS IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.

No reader acquainted with local history can fail to have learnt that preceding generations of townsmen have had special and uncommon experiences in connection with ecclesiastical affairs. We can scarcely

go back to the earliest centuries of the Christian era, in illustration of the truth, because all that relates to the state of religion in this locality, during those remote periods, is wrapped either in oblivion or obscurity. A local historian (quoting Speed<sup>u</sup>) states that during the persecution by Diocletian, two Christians named Julius and Aaron, were subjected to martyrdom in Leicester. If this representation were true, we should have reason to believe the votaries of the Cross were known in the Roman town at the close of the third century; but we may be certain that heathen temples then stood within the walls, where the false Gods in which the age believed were worshipped. It may be inferred one of these buildings stood on the site of St. Martin's Church—the foundations of Roman masonry and the bases of columns having been there discovered when the new tower and spire were erected. It was the advice of Pope Gregory that Christian worship should be conducted on spots where Pagan rites had been observed, in order to draw the people from the old superstition to the new faith; and therefore, in so central a position as that occupied by St. Martin's, it is very probable the wise policy of the head of ancient Christendom may have been pursued in connection with this locality. At what dates between the withdrawal of the Romans from this island (*circa* 450), and the Norman Conquest (1066), the parishes were formed, and the first churches built in them, is a matter of conjecture. All we know is that when the Domesday Survey was taken (*circa* 1086), Hugh de Grantmesnil was recorded to be the possessor of four churches in the town, which were evidently those erected before the Conquest; and would probably be St. Martin's, St. Nicholas', All Saints', and St. Margaret's—for St. Mary's was originally within the precincts of the Castle and a mere chapel for the use of its inmates.

Even as early as the thirteenth century the surface of ecclesiastical uniformity was broken by the influence of Robert Grossetête, the bishop of the diocese, who, originally rector of St. Margaret's, and then archdeacon of Leicester, raised his voice alike against priestly corruptions and papal assumption. That the sentiments of such a man would be widely known among the inhabitants of Leicester can hardly be doubted, and may have aroused the first aspirations in favour of religious freedom and church reform, which were rendered deeper in the succeeding century by the preaching of Wickliffe, and his disciple, William of Swyndurby; made irrepressible by the appeals of Latimer of Thurcaston; and acquired permanent power on the success of the Reformation under Henry the Eighth. For

<sup>u</sup> Speed refers to Bede, who may intend *Caer Leon* upon *Usk*—not *Caer Lerion* (Leicester).

successive centuries, therefore, the people of this locality were under the influence of great minds—of minds in advance of the ages in which they lived; and their teachings, however much forbidden, cannot fail to have been handed down traditionally by individuals and in families, from the day when Robert Grossetête raised his voice against the malpractices of pope and priest, down to the date when the son of the yeoman of Thurcaston bravely gave up his spirit in the flames at Oxford.

But in the time of Henry the Eighth true religious freedom and the rights of conscience were little understood. In his reign, and that of his imperious daughter Elizabeth, Nonconformity was considered to be a crime, punishable by death, fine, and imprisonment. It was not until the Commonwealth liberated religious opinion, that men openly professed varieties of faith and practised observances different from those of the State Church; and then there was an exhibition of differences, not to say eccentricities, in these respects, which contrasts remarkably with the state of ecclesiastical affairs in any preceding epoch. In Leicester, Baptists, Independents, and Presbyterians, all appear to have co-existed, and openly worshipped according to their own ideas, as soon as the rule of Charles the First had been superseded by that of the Parliament. We obtain a vivid insight into the religious state of the place from the record which the first Quaker made of his visit to Leicester. From his description (given in his Journal) we learn that early in the year 1648 a great meeting was held in Leicester for the discussion of religious subjects, to which he was "moved" to repair. The assembly was held in a "steeple-house" (which it seems probable was St. Martin's Church), where the people were in the pews and the "priest" in the pulpit. Presbyterians, Baptists, and Independents were present, as well as Episcopalians. A discussion arose upon what constituted a "church," George Fox explaining it to be "a spiritual household, of whom Christ is the head"—not "a mixed multitude, or an old house made up of lime, stones, and wood." This definition set all the congregation "on fire," says George Fox: the "priest" left the pulpit, the people deserted the pews, and the meeting broke up in confusion. The discussion was continued at an inn, to which the Friend went with the "priest" and professors of all kinds, and there, finally, all his opponents gave in, and at last fled away.

When the Independents gained the ascendancy in 1652, they filled the pulpits of the parish churches with ministers of their own persuasion.

This state of things did not, however, last long; for after the restoration of Charles the Second grievous restrictions were placed



upon all Dissenters from the Church of England. In the year 1670, the Conventicle Act was passed, which rendered Nonconformist preachers and hearers, meeting in houses, alike liable to heavy fines with the persons in whose houses they assembled. John Bunyan had a license to preach as a congregational "parson," and was in Leicester on Sunday, the 6th of October, 1672, probably to address his friends of the Baptist denomination. Several inhabitants of Leicester were charged with having been present at a conventicle early in the year 1683, and were fined for the offence by the borough justices.<sup>v</sup> Four years afterwards, James the Second published a declaration allowing liberty of conscience to all his subjects, under cover of which he hoped to reintroduce the Roman Catholic religion; and in May 1688 the declaration was ordered to be read in all churches and chapels. But no faith was placed in the last of the Stuarts by the English people; so he lost his crown and fled the country.

In April 1689 the Toleration Act was passed for the relief of Dissenters, by virtue of which they were exempted from penalty for non-attendance at the established places of worship, and their meeting-houses were protected from insult and damage. The Presbyterians of Leicester formed a congregation about the year 1680,<sup>w</sup> and assembled at a place in Oxford Street; the site of which is no longer remembered. In 1708 they erected the Great Meeting. Nicholas Kestin, M.A., of Gumley, after having been silenced in that place came to Leicester, and also became pastor of a congregation, subsequently to the passing of the Act of Uniformity. George Fox rejoiced that he made a convert (a female) when he held his dispute with the people of Leicester in 1648, and in 1699 a Joseph Smith, a Quaker, was made a freeman of the borough.

It was in the following century that Dissent fairly established itself in Leicester. At its commencement (1705), Mr. Cart, one of the churchwardens of St. Martin's, found sixty-five Independents or Presbyterians, six "Anabaptists," thirteen Quakers, and two "Papists," living in the parish. In 1709 another parochial return was made to the Bishop of the Diocese, when the numbers seem to have decreased; there being then forty-two Independents or Presbyterians, eight Quakers, two Baptists, and one Roman Catholic. In both cases the persons spoken of were of adult age. At the date of the last return a Baptist meeting-house existed in St. Martin's parish, at which persons named Treen, Davy (Leicester), and Stanton (Belgrave), preached on Sundays.

<sup>v</sup> See *History of Leicester* (1849), p. 436.

<sup>w</sup> Gardiner's *Music and Friends*, Vol. 1., p. 23.

The Church now meeting in the Friar Lane Chapel is supposed to have originated during the time of the Commonwealth. There is a tradition that on one of his visits to Leicester, John Bunyan preached in their little Meeting-house, then situated down a yard, and on part of the site of the present chapel. In the month of August 1719, Elias Wallin the elder conveyed to twelve trustees the two cottages or tenements, with their appurtenances, situated in the "Freer" Lane; also, all that yard, piece, or parcel of ground adjoining and belonging to the said cottages; and also, all that newly-erected edifice or building containing three bays of buildings, with the appurtenances standing on the said yard or parcel of ground, and used as a place for divine worship. The names of the trustees were—Henry Greene, Zacharias Stanton, Thomas Davye, Thos. Storer, Zakaniah Read, John Iliffe, Thos. Stanton, John Cave, William Arnold, Joseph Coltman, George Keslin, and Elias Wallin the younger. Thomas Davye is probably the person mentioned in the return of 1709 to the Bishop of the Diocese, as one of the preachers at the Baptist Meeting-house in St. Martin's parish; and one of the Stantons would doubtless be the other, there being two persons of that name among the trustees. There is lying before the writer\* "A register of the names of the Members of the Church of Christ, in and about Leicester, of baptized believers, who profess the faith of Christ as delivered in Heb. vi. 1, 2, &c., Anno Domini 1750, and who belong to the Church meeting in Leicester." The wording of the above seems to imply that, at that time, the Friar Lane Church was the only Society of Baptists in the town; and that they were simply Baptists, unassociated either with the Particular or the General Baptist denomination. William Arnold was the Elder or Minister; perhaps the same person whose name occurs in the list of Trustees. The register contains a list of forty-three names of members then united in the fellowship of the Church. For several years subsequently there were no additions. One person was baptized in 1756, seven in 1757, one in 1758, and twenty-one in 1759. From that time the Church declined in numbers. Only six were added during the following eleven years, and apparently none from 1770 to 1782, when the Church had become almost extinct, and only fourteen members remained on the list. Mr. John Deacon of Barton Fabis was invited in that year to become the Minister, and the Church agreed that in the event of his complying with the invitation, they would propose themselves the first convenient opportunity to join that body of General Baptists with which Mr. Deacon was united, in order that they

\* I am indebted to the courtesy of the Rev. J. C. Pike, Minister of Friar Lane Chapel, for the account of the Baptists given in the paragraph in the text.

might belong to the same Connexion. Under Mr. Deacon's ministry the Church and Congregation rapidly increased. The meeting-house of 1719 became too small, and after a few years it was agreed to rebuild it "upon a larger and more commodious plan." This Chapel was also built in the yard, behind the Cottages. It was not till November 1804 that the following resolution was passed at a meeting of the members of the Church. "Agreed that the houses belonging to the Meeting be taken down next spring, and that the tenants have notice to quit next Lady-day." It is an interesting circumstance that a Mr. Thomas Stevenson was engaged to do the work; but whether the father or the grandfather of the present respected Pastor of the Archdeacon Lane Church is not certain—probably the former. There were two Thomas Stevensons, senior and junior, members of the Church at the time. The resolution on the subject was as follows:—"17th February, 1805. It is agreed that Mr. W. Sykes and Mr. Thos. Stevenson shall have the materials of the old houses, and fill up the present cellar with soil, cover the soil with gravel, making the road ready for paving, and every thing cleared away ready to begin to build a front wall, paying to the Church the sum of ten guineas, to be paid by the 25th of April next, by which time the whole shall be cleared away." Iron palisades were subsequently placed in front of the Chapel.

Other interesting facts in reference to the same Church might be mentioned; but as they belong to the present century, they do not come within the scope of the present work.

The only denomination which refused to pay Church Rates was the Society of Friends, concerning whom the following entry is made in the parish book of St. Martin's:—

"1707.

"May 8. The Quakers refusing to pay anything to Church levies, it is agreed that they shall be charged so much more to the poor's tax as will balance what they ought to pay to the Church."

Up to the middle of the century the Presbyterians, the Independents, and the Baptists, appear to have been the only Nonconformist denominations established in Leicester. The earnest minds of the community were chiefly attached to one or other of the Dissenting bodies, of which the Presbyterian occupied the chief position. Shortly after the century was half completed a great stimulus was imparted to religious feeling—more particularly among the classes living by labour, and not reached by the efforts of existing religious organizations—by the propagandist zeal and eloquent appeals of John Wesley.

In a previous chapter, some notice has appeared in the course of the

narrative of the early visits of that remarkable man to Leicester. A mistake has, however, been made in stating that he was present here for the first time in 1770. One of the earliest scenes of his itinerant labour, which may be called the "mother church" of these parts, was the village of Markfield. According to his Diary, he rode to the place on Friday, June 8, 1753.<sup>y</sup> On the following Sunday (being Whit-Sunday) the church contained the congregation tolerably well. After dinner, a gentleman who had ridden from Leicester (who, it is believed, was a Mr. Coltman, the inhabitant of the house in which John Bunyan had preached about eighty years before) invited the venerable Wesley to visit this town. About eight o'clock in the evening he addressed an assembly in an open space, near the Great Meeting, called the Butt Close. High and low, rich and poor, came running from all parts to hear him; and it is creditable to the people of that day to record that "their behaviour surprised" the preacher—"they were so serious and attentive," he says, "not one offering any interruption."

After the lapse of about four years, Mr. Wesley again visited Leicester, and found a small society gathered together, under the care of John Brandon, a dragoon, who then acted as Leader and Preacher to the little flock, and who subsequently itinerated for some years under Mr. Wesley's direction. There was then living in High Street a Mr. William Lewis, a hosier, in whose house was a spacious room licensed for public worship, which was the first place used by the Leicester Society.<sup>z</sup> In the evening of April 14, 1757, at seven o'clock, Mr. Wesley preached to an assembly estimated by him at a thousand in number, among whom were forty or fifty soldiers, and "all heard as for life."

Mr. Lewis had purchased an antiquated building in Millstone Lane, called the "Old Barn," in the year 1753. It had been used as a tithe-barn, a play-house, a riding-school, and even as a store-house for coals. It was entered by two clumsy folding-doors, in one of which was a smaller door, used on ordinary occasions. The interior was lofty; the thatched roof being supported in the middle by wooden props, and open to the summit; and the windows high up in the walls. In the hours of evening service, the building was lighted by a three-branched wooden chandelier. In this chamber so dreary in the

<sup>y</sup> The particulars in the text are compiled from an account of "Methodism in Leicester," written by the Rev. William W. Stamp, which appeared in the *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine* for February 1834. A copy of the number was obligingly lent to the Author by Mr. J. R. Rowe, Granby Street.

<sup>z</sup> The portrait of this Mr. Lewis is still preserved in the Vestry of Bishopgate Street Chapel.

daytime, so sombre and comfortless at night, the early Methodists of Leicester, men and women sitting on opposite sides, according to apostolic practice, were wont to worship. The "Old Barn" had been converted into a place of worship and generously given to the Society by Mr. Lewis, who, though a warm supporter of Methodism in its infancy, was a Presbyterian. Even here, however, they were not unmolested, for Mr. Lewis's son, taking advantage of a flaw in the deed of conveyance, on his father's decease claimed the premises, and before dying himself, shortly after, bequeathed them to a friend; thus far frustrating his father's liberal intentions. At this juncture, however, Mr. Lewis's widow, from motives of affectionate veneration for his memory, repurchased the property, and thus secured its appropriation for the purposes for which it was designed by her deceased husband. The sum of £81 was given for the building. By a deed bearing date December 23, 1768, it was then, as a Methodist Chapel, vested in the following trustees:—Samuel Matthews, John Coltman, Stephen Pick, Thomas Prestin, William Goodrich, Zechariah Siday, Joseph Whittle, Peter Jacques, Thomas Price, William Weewall, John Beals, of Leicester; Henry Fosbrook, of Hoton; Nicholas Lowe, of Hathern; Joseph Calladine, of Diseworth; and Stephen Wood, of Loughborough. The meeting-house now received the name of the Tabernacle.

At this time the Society did not include more than twenty members, mostly poor persons. It was not until some years after, their contribution to the Quarter-day Board amounted to sixteen shillings. Among their number were Zechariah Siday, Joseph Whittle, Peter Jacques, John Beals, John Wright, Mary Siday, Mary Hartram, Thomas Gamble, Sarah Taylor, Thomas Price, and Jenny Sykes. Zechariah Siday was a tailor and schoolmaster, and the leader of the little band. Jenny Sykes was a gatherer of rags, and sold laces, buckles, and similar articles. For many years she entertained the preachers, who used in a facetious style to boast that "in Leicester their hostess was a linnen-draper!" She became the second wife of Zechariah in 1773, and she and her husband were buried near the pulpit in the Tabernacle. Sarah Taylor (who became Mrs. Clough), and Thomas Gamble (living in 1834), were well-known members of the infant society—the latter-named having been connected with it upwards of sixty-five years. In the beginning it was exposed to insult and persecution, and had to appeal to the law for protection. Several of the offenders were for a time imprisoned; and it was then allowed to worship God in comparative quiet; but, says the historian of the body, "These were not the days of silken professorship; principle and profession were not unfrequently severely tested."

In the summer of 1770, Mr. Wesley preached in the Castle Yard.<sup>a</sup> A feeble and unsuccessful attempt was made to disturb him; Mr. Gamble being present distinctly recollected the circumstances, and the text he expounded (Luke c. xix., verses 41, 42). When Mr. Bardsley preached in the Market Place, in the year 1772, he was seized by one of the constables, and taken before Mr. Cartwright, the Mayor; but, on remonstrating with his Worship, was simply reprimanded and dismissed with the remark, "Come, come, you are not to preach here." Mr. Cartwright, the son of the Mayor, kept the Cherry Tree Inn, and was the host of Mr. Bardsley when he next visited Leicester. In the spring of the same year (March 20, 1772) Mr. Wesley once more ministered to the Society: in the morning he rode to Markfield; in the evening he preached to a large congregation, when (he says) "all seemed willing to receive that important truth, 'Without holiness no man shall see the Lord.'"

From the formation of the Society until the year 1776, Leicester was included in what was then termed the "Derbyshire Round." It comprised, in addition to several circuits northward of Derby, what subsequently became the Nottingham, Leicester, Loughborough, Hinckley, and Ashby circuits. At the Conference held in the year last-named, Leicester was separated from the "Derbyshire Round," and constituted the head of a circuit. In 1787, although the local Society had received but little augmentation, either as to numbers or pecuniary resources, the Tabernacle was taken down, and a commodious chapel, capable of accommodating upwards of four hundred persons, was erected on its site. The late Dr. Coke officiated at the opening; and the chapel being too small to contain the congregation which assembled in the morning, the Unitarians kindly offered the use of their chapel for the service of the evening. The offer was accepted, and the doctor preached with unusual animation from the text commencing "the Word was made flesh." For some years after its erection the chapel was supplied with travelling preachers only once a fortnight. It was regularly settled on the undermentioned trustees:—John Coltman, William Weewall, Samuel Matthews, Joseph Whittle, Samuel Fosbrook, William Wise, Francis Rayns, John Beals, of Leicester; Stephen Hood, of Loughborough; Joseph Sowter, of Castle Donington; Benjamin Scattergood, of Syston; William Cooper, of Rotherby; and John Iliffe, of Humberstone.

For the last time, Mr. Wesley preached in this town in the year 1790, when he was the guest of Mr. John Rawson. His subject was the first verse of the thirty-third Psalm: "Rejoice in the Lord, O ye righteous: for praise is comely for the upright." The sermon

<sup>a</sup> See *ante*, pp. 140 and 141.

was extemporaneous, plain in its phraseology, and interspersed with frequent ejaculatory prayer for the immediate blessing of God upon the Word. In his discourse, alluding to persons who were deemed righteous, and who said of themselves, "I have done no harm; I have paid every one his own; I have done as I would be done by, I must be righteous," he exclaimed with peculiar energy, "Then the birds of the air are righteous!"

At this time, Mr. Wesley was sustaining with unusual vigour the weight of more than fourscore years; his hair was white as snow; his eye, notwithstanding his advanced age, was bright and piercing; and his countenance peculiarly placid and benignant. Every one contemplated him with regard and reverence, and people and groups of persons saluted the venerable and saintly man with respect as he passed along the streets. In the simple language of the Apostle whom he is said to have much resembled, he acknowledged these greetings by saying "Little children, love one another."

From the year 1782 the preachers had occupied a small house in Castle Donington; but when that place became the head of a circuit, in 1793, a house was appropriated in Leicester for their residence. It was in Southgate Street, opposite Bakehouse Lane. As this history relates only to the events of the eighteenth century, those of a succeeding period are left for narration hereafter.

In the year 1791, the Society of Friends had a Meeting-house, standing near the North Gate, on the site still occupied by a chapel. They were not then numerous; they were said to retain more of the original simplicity of dress and manners, characteristic of their body, than was seen in other towns.

The Roman Catholics carried on their worship privately, at the same date, in a room of a house, in a lane near the Town Gaol. The priest (the Rev. Mr. Chappell) was a gentleman of education and suavity of manners; but he made no proselytes. Not a family or a person had been added to the congregation for fifty years previous to 1791. A few years after, a place of public worship was provided; as, it will have been perceived, has been stated at page 226.

In volume 1, part 2, at page 547, of Nichols's *History of Leicestershire*, published in 1815, other denominations are mentioned as existing in Leicester; but their establishment in the town seems to have been after the commencement of the present century.

CROSSLEY AND CLARKE, PRINTERS, LEICESTER.



AN  
ESSAY ON ENGLISH MUNICIPAL HISTORY,

BY  
JAMES THOMPSON,

AUTHOR OF A "HISTORY OF LEICESTER FROM THE TIME OF THE  
ROMANS TO THE END OF THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY," AND  
OTHER WORKS.

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The *Saturday Review* concluded a lengthy criticism with these remarks :—

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"Mr. James Thompson, of Leicester, has just published an Essay on English Municipal History of great interest and value to enquirers into the origin and history of our local government. \* \* \* \* \* Very much curious matter illustrative of mediæval town life is included in Mr. Thompson's interesting essay. \* \* \* Of such curious and instructive matter Mr. Thompson's most agreeable little volume is full. Leicester does not monopolize his attention. He has information about St. Alban's, Preston, Norwich, Yarmouth, Hineckley, Melton Mowbray, and other towns not interesting merely, but practically useful."

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"The history of the origin and progressive development of Municipal Government in this country has, in modern times, afforded a fruitful theme for the researches of the archæologist and the dissertations of the learned. In the absence of established facts and authentic ancient documents it has been found extremely difficult, however, to arrive at a conclusion having more than a remote degree of probability to recommend it. Hence it is only natural to suppose that varied and conflicting theories should have been advanced by some of our eminent jurists, a supposition which is amply borne out by facts. These theories, although plausible enough in some instances, were nevertheless inadequate to the solution of the great question of which they treated. Based on imperfect data, for the most part, they could never be relied upon to establish an inductive conclusion; and hence, when brought to the test of patient criticism, they have been found untenable, and in

fact little better than mere unsupported conjecture. To the painstaking inquirer such a result is no doubt disheartening in a high degree; but, thanks to the spirit of antiquarian research so characteristic of the present age and pre-eminently of our own country, these obstacles no longer appear to be insuperable. In the admirable treatise before us—a volume which is as modest and unassuming as it is lucid and argumentative—the results of minute inquiries extending over a number of years are embodied by the author with singular force and clearness of judgment. In arriving at these conclusions Mr. Thompson has relied solely upon well-authenticated facts. These are derived from original documents handed down by our ancestors themselves, and which on that account must contain the germs at least of historic truth; and for this reason they must be accepted as the groundwork for any probable account which can be given of the origin and progress of our Municipal Freedom. Premising these few observations, we come to examine the essay before us; and considering how much of interest the subject has for the inhabitants of boroughs especially, our readers will probably be desirous of having an extended notice of the work placed before them. The first chapter is devoted to a brief but comprehensive notice of the Roman Municipalities in Britain, the large cities being classified according to the arrangement given by Richard of Cirencester, viz. Colonies, Municipia, towns endowed with the Latian Right, and Stipendiary Towns. After the reign of Caracalla (*ob. circiter* A.D. 217) the freedom of the city was given to the inhabitants of all the Roman British stations alike, and these communities, after payment of the imperial taxes, were left the privilege of independent self-government in municipal affairs. No written record of this period has descended, however, to modern times; but the chapter is no less interesting, for without it there would be a disagreeable hiatus in the chronological order in which the subject of Municipal Government in Britain necessarily requires to be treated. We now come to the Saxon invasion, the success of which was accelerated by the complete disintegration of the political system of the island which ensued on the conclusion of the Roman domination. The British towns, no longer confederated even for defensive purposes, became a prey to anarchy and petty dissensions. It is probable, too, that fresh immigrations of the Teutonic element took place, so that as the fierce Saxons and other tribes pressed inland in successive swarms the great cities either were forcibly taken by or were betrayed to the resistless invaders. Two questions here met the author:—1st. Did the Saxons ultimately become the inhabitants of the Roman-British towns? and 2nd, Did they introduce into them, for purposes of government, their own local institutions? The substitution of the language of the invaders for that of the Latin tongue spoken in the British towns leads us naturally to the inference that the conquerors swept away all the existing institutions and supplanted them by Saxon forms of local government. It is to this transition period the author traces the origin of our municipal institutions. The chiefs amongst the new owners became in their own domains the rulers—or, as we say, the “lords of the manors”—and held Courts Leet, presided over by the steward or deputy of the manorial lord, in which criminal laws were administered and civil suits determined, the power of appeal to higher courts being reserved to litigants in matters of grave importance. In process of time, when the towns became populous, they sought to procure a similar authority for themselves in their communal character, and this led to another important institution, known as the Merchant’s Guild, which was to be found in most of the ancient boroughs in the Saxon period. In developing the subject the author has illustrated the principles already laid down by going in detail into the histories of several towns and showing the

actual operation of the elementary systems of local government. His conclusions are based principally upon the ancient documents to which he has had access. An interesting chapter at the close of the volume is devoted to a critical comparison between the French communes and the English boroughs, after which Mr. Thompson offers some practical suggestions as to the general enfranchisement of English towns by a general Act constituting Local Boards of Health Corporations, on the same principle as that on which the Municipal Reform Act erected the old boroughs of England into new boroughs, without calling for the concession of royal charters. Such is a brief outline of the work before us. The author is throughout consistent and logical; and the research which is manifested in every page must command attention from even the most superficial reader. The theory which he has advanced seems highly probable; and indeed its adoption is fatal to many fantastic speculations which have been, in the absence of authentic documentary evidence, hitherto currently accepted as historical conclusions. The language is terse and vigorous; some of the descriptions of ancient life and social customs are ornate, and cannot but be attractive to the general masses of the reading public; while the extreme accuracy of the inductive arguments used from beginning to end is such as to ensure for the theory advanced by the author an attentive consideration at the hands of the learned. The volume embodies an amount of rare and invaluable information never previously offered to the public, and we have no doubt that it will meet with that appreciation which genuine merit seldom fails of receiving in this enlightened country. Mr. Thompson's Essay is a valuable addition to our standard literature, and we cordially commend it to the attention of every class of the lovers of Municipal Freedom."

*The Stamford Mercury* :—

"The study of the ancient municipal office is of great importance in a country where precedent weighs with so much force as it does in England, and in this respect Mr. Thompson's essay is a valuable guide to those who take delight in comparing the present with the past. The notice of the borough of Leicester is a concise history of that important town; and similar notices of St. Alban's, Preston, Norwich, and Yarmouth, furnish interesting facts with regard to those places. The peculiar jurisdictions of towns not incorporated, such as Melton Mowbray and Hinckley, are set forth, and a comparison is instituted between the French communes and English boroughs. The author highly commends the reformed municipal system, and as a practical conclusion contends that the Municipal Reform Act should be extended to all communities capable of self-government."

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